PIEBALD KING OF BRONCHOS

PIEBALD, KING OF BRONCHOS

The Biography of a Wild Horse

BOOKS BY

CLARENCE HAWKES

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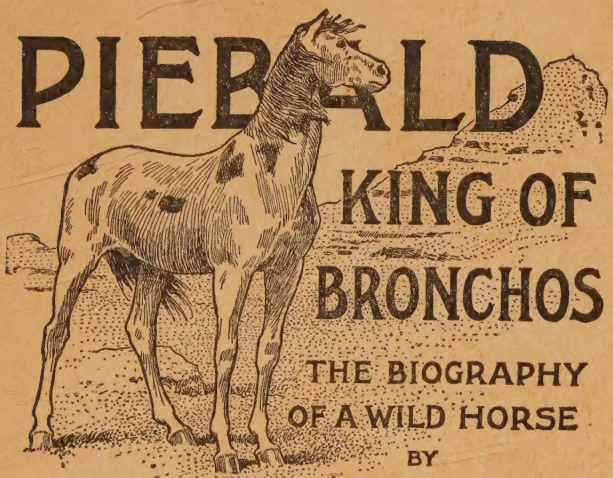

KING OF BRONCHOS

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A WILD HORSE

BY

CLARENCE HAWKES

AUTHOR OF

KING OF THE THUNDERING HERD
THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BUFFALO

A WILDERNESS DOG
THE BIOGRAPHY OF A WOLF

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etc.

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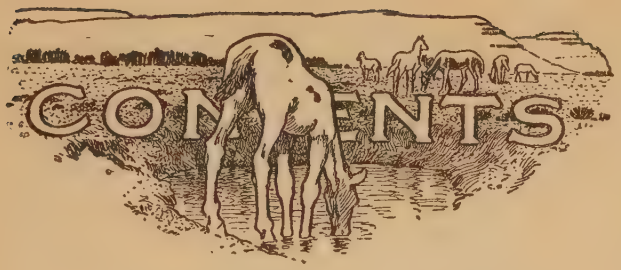

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INTRODUCTORY

THE INIMITABLE HORSE

Ever since the dawn of written history the annals of man have been thickly sprinkled with glowing tributes to the usefulness and beauty of the horse, showing his close relationship to his master.

Even before what we call the age of history there were trustworthy accounts of the close relationship between the two. All through the stone age horse and man were closely associated, according to the records which we find. It was not so much as a beast of burden then that the horse existed, for he had been very little domesticated in Europe, but rather as quarry,—the object of the chase, and the best source of meat that primitive man had.

Strange to say, the equine family had entirely disappeared in the Western hemisphere when Columbus discovered America, and all the horses that we now possess have been imported. The horse, according to the fossil record, once existed in abundance in both North and South America, and why he should have disappeared so completely is one of the puzzles of geology.

The horse, the ass and the zebra are all variations of the same family, while the mule is a hybrid, being produced as a cross between the horse and the ass. References to the horse are found in ancient writings both religious and historical. Julius Cæsar, in his commentaries, mentions the skill of a certain northern tribe in driving their chariots when in battle, while still more ancient references to famous charioteers are found in Egyptian history. The war chariots of the Egyptians foundered in the Red Sea while pursuing the Children of Israel.

The simile of the horse and his rider, and the Chariots of the Lord, occurs frequently in Biblical history, while to "drive like Jehu" is a byword to-day.

Thus is the ancient and honorable history and pedigree of the horse as a co-worker and helper of man thoroughly established.

The primitive horse, however, was a heavily-built, clumsy creature, covered with a coarse, straggling coat, and quite dissimilar to the beautiful modern race-horse which man has developed. But from this clumsy creature all the varieties of horse-flesh which we now know, from the tiny Shetland pony, which has been dwarfed by inclement climate, to the heaviest Percheron draft horses, have been bred by man. Natural selection for certain qualities has been the line along which he has worked.

How rapidly nature can work when the pressure is great is amply illustrated by the following incident.

About four hundred years ago some Spaniards left a few horses of normal size upon an island in the Pacific Ocean.

Nothing was known or seen of them until about ten years ago when some Englishmen chanced to land upon the island. They had a collie dog with them, and his attention was at once attracted by a herd of small animals about the size of sheep. On being encouraged to do so, the collie pursued the small creatures and pulled one of them down. The astonishment of the man can well be imagined on coming up to find that the dog had captured a tiny horse, the weight of which finally was recorded as forty-two pounds, while a full-grown mare was captured from the same herd, weighing only twenty-one pounds. These Lilliputian horses were afterward shown at the New York horse show.

Yet this marvelous change had been brought about merely by the effect of the

climate upon the normal horses which the Spaniards had left upon the island four hundred years before. So working through countless centuries, with thought to guide him, what could not man accomplish by way of variety?

The horses of the early Britains were small ponies, but the breed was greatly improved in 1066 when the Normans defeated the Britains at the battle of Hastings, for they rode their Norman chargers, famed in song and story.

Later on, King John further improved the English horse by importing a hundred Flanders mares, while Charles II, who was called the best horseman in Europe, also imported a fine stud.

But the sires of the modern race-horse were three in number, two Arabian, and one Bard, from Morocco, imported in the seventeenth century. From these three famous stallions nearly all the fine race-

horses in both England and America have sprung.

Early in the history of the colonies fine horses were imported to America, especially in Virginia and Maryland, where much of the sporting spirit of the old world was kept up. It was probably from this racing stock that the Kentucky thoroughbred of to-day was moulded.

Until within the last thirty or forty years England held the palm for racing horses, but of late even the Englishman is obliged to admit the superiority of the American bred race-horse, especially our trotting horses; while to my knowledge old Salvator's record of one thirty-five for a mile, made at the Brooklyn handicap about twenty years ago, is still a landmark.

But for the most intimate relationship between horse and man we must return to the Arab who gave us the finest racing stock in the first place.

Some of the purest strains of the Arabian horses are said to date back to the days of Abraham, their pedigrees being kept from generation to generation upon marble slabs, and guarded as the most sacred possession of the Bedouin.

It was Bayard Taylor who caused the Arab to sing :

> "From the Desert I come to Thee, on my stallion shod with fire."

The Arab literally ate and slept with his steed. If he had a permanent abode and dwelt for a time within the town, the horses occupied the lower story of the house and the men and women the upper, but in his tent where he most often lived, there was no such nice distinction, for here his horses had one portion of the tent and he and his family the other. This, too, was the life that he best loved. To sit at the table or squat upon the ground, and at the same

time be able to pass titbits to his noble steed as he ate, was his delight.

Nothing was too good for these high-bred dainty desert horses. As fleet as the wind, more beautiful than artist has ever been able to paint them, and almost as inured to the desert hardship as the camel himself, is it any wonder that the Bedouin loved his horse? Even the horses so remotely descended from those famous desert kings are beautiful to our Occidental eyes. To us these horses are not endeared by hundreds of years of close companionship with our ancestors. They are not celebrated in our folk-lore, or praised in our song and story as they are in Arabic, yet we too love them for what they are, so is it any wonder that the Arab worships his horse?

It would almost seem, too, that this pedigreed horse was conscious that he was a thoroughbred, for how proudly he arches his crest, how disdainfully he sniffs the air,

and how lightly his slender hoof spurns mother earth. In his fiery eye, too, is hauteur, and his skin is as soft and transparent as thousands of years of skilful breeding can make it.

All barbaric people have loved horses, showing that the horse appeals to the most primitive instincts of man.

First of all the wild beasts that the savages of all times have subdued, comes the horse. His fleetness and his adaptability to the wants of man have made him a prize in all times.

In both peace and war he has figured. The great generals of all times have had their favorite steeds, and the names of these horses have endured where many important facts of history have failed. The hordes of the Khan came riding over the Steppes of Siberia splendidly mounted, for the Tartar was always a celebrated horseman. The ancient Egyptians were famous charioteers

and their chariots figured largely in battle. The Romans were famed for their chariot races, the spirit of which has been so well preserved for us by General Lew Wallace in "Ben Hur." The modern circus is a child's plaything for size compared with the amphitheatres of old, the one at Antioch seating two hundred and fifty thousand people.

Great skill and strength were needed to guide these gilded cars, drawn by four horses abreast, around the great circle, which was lined for the entire distance by the cheering populace.

The driver always stood, and a broken chariot wheel meant a horrible death neath flying hoofs, or, if the charioteer chanced to survive such an accident, the disgrace of his fall was even more bitter than death, and he usually committed suicide to escape a tarnished name.

Until after the Spaniards came, the

American Indians always went on foot, for there were no horses in the Western hemisphere during the history of man, until recent centuries. Fossil remains of the horse are found in geological ages, but nothing recent.

When the Spaniards made their precipitate flight from Mexico, they left behind some of their horses, and these, together with others that strayed away from time to time, were the nucleus from which all the wild horses of America sprang.

Indian pintos, and the mustangs of the Western cow punchers, have come to be a delightful feature of the American circus, as well as the riding of these daredevil Westerners.

But it is with the team horse and the family carriage horse, the riding horse, and the children's pet, the Shetland pony, that we have become most closely associated: these familiar equines, who are in many

cases almost one of the family, and whose size alone prevents their coming into the house.

The horse who eats lumps of sugar from your hand, and who always whinnies when you appear, is indeed an affectionate fellow.

How many a patient farm horse there is, and many a well-groomed carriage horse for that matter, who look forward each day to seeing the children come to the barn!

Laughing and romping they come, climb upon the sides of the stall, and thence to the horse's back, until he is covered with squirming humanity from his neck to his tail. Does he mind it? No. He is as glad to have the daily "trot to Boston" as they are.

The favorite of all horse-flesh with children is the Shetland pony, coming from the Shetland Islands, a part of the Orkney group along the east coast of Scotland.

These little horses are very hardy, as their native islands are extremely cold. Often in the winter they are obliged to paw away the snow and eat frozen moss, or to bunch themselves together to keep warm.

Because of this extreme cold, nature has given them long, thick coats to shield them in winter from the biting blast.

It is said that when the Spanish Armada was wrecked upon the north coast of Scotland, many of the cavalry horses aboard swam ashore. At that time they were ordinary sized horses, but the rigor of the Scottish winter has reduced them to the present diminutive size.

Formerly in nearly all countries the horse was merely a beast of burden, or a faithful messenger whose portion was kicks and blows and general hard usage; but gradually this conception of the horse is becoming modified. Little by little this splendid animal has crept into the affec-

tions of man until he has come to be a companion.

He can no longer be whipped and beaten upon the public street with impunity. The general public has constituted itself a guardian of the horse against the abuse of unkind masters.

The electric car and the motor vehicle have also played their part in his emancipation. No longer do we see horses slipping and falling upon rough pavements, hauling heavy street-cars, loaded to their utmost capacity. He still does his part upon the heavy dray, but even here the motor truck is rapidly succeeding him.

But more than all these things taken together, those humane societies, which have for their mission the betterment of the condition of animals, have brought the horse into his own.

Kindness and human consideration of all God's creatures (and some of the lower

animals are very little removed from the human) are coming more and more to be the gospel of the better class of people.

We are coming to share the practice of the Asiatic who fears to kill anything that moves and has life, lest he break the chain whereby he himself climbs back to his estate of manhood.

In our public schools the sacredness of all life, and the vital necessity of each species to the whole, is freely taught. From childhood up, children are learning to reverence the things that God has made.

They are taught the mission of the toads and the frogs and all the crawling, creeping things, which, unless one be versed in the ways of nature, seem almost useless.

But nature is all wise. There is nothing in her kingdom that does not serve some useful end.

More eloquent and more touching than all the cavalry horses that ever pranced be-

hind the funeral car of a dead general, more fitting than all the pomp and pride of polished bays and blacks, was an incident in the funeral cortège of the late George T. Angell, the founder of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Hundreds of hack-loads of the most influential citizens of Boston were in attendance, and stood for hours in a drizzling rain, all glad of the privilege to do honor to so great a man.

But more eloquent than the tears of the humans were the black rosettes worn by two thousand horses in the funeral procession, showing that all horse-flesh mourned the passing of its best friend and original benefactor.

A writer of international reputation, who is accustomed to weigh well her words, said at the time: "I would rather have such a burial as that than the obsequies of Cæsar or Napoleon."

To all lovers of horses the following toast, found in a Maryland stable and of unknown origin, will leave little to be said :

"Here's to that bundle of sentient nerves, with the eye of a gazelle, the heart of a woman, the courage of a gladiator, the docility of a slave, the proud carriage of a king, and the blind obedience of a soldier; the companion of the desert plain; the one that faithfully turns the furrows in the spring, that all the world may have abundant harvest; that furnishes the sport of kings; that, with blazing eye, and distended nostril, fearlessly carries our greatest generals through the carnage to renown; whose blood forms one of the ingredients that go to make the ink in which all history is written; and who finally, in black trappings, draws the humblest of us to the newly-sodded threshold of Eternity."

CHAPTER I

A BATTLE TO THE DEATH

Piebald, King of Bronchos

CHAPTER I

A BATTLE TO THE DEATH

To most of us the word desert has a sinister sound, while the thought of being lost upon that lonely, lifeless, scorching waste is enough to strike terror to the stoutest heart.

That there should be those, desert born, to whom the desert should hold a peculiar charm, to whom it might seem like home, is not strange. For where we are born and bred, there we take root, and though the landscape is ever so unpromising it comes, from long association, to be fair to our eyes. Thus, the Bedouin and the Navajo are quite excusable for loving the desert. To them the shimmering waste, with its

fantastic rocks and its livid colors, is a thing of beauty; and the desert calls them as the sea does the sailor, the prairies the plainsman, or the wooded mountain tops and the deep, sequestered glens the woodsman.

But that one city- or town-bred should ever hear the desert siren's call, and answer it, is almost too strange to believe. Yet those who are in a position to know tell us that stronger than the call of the forest, or the plains, or the sea is the call of the desert. Many a man from the East, born and educated in some great metropolis, who shuddered at the first sight of the great Western desert, has returned to it again and again, drawn hence by some miraculous power. To him it was a force stronger than his own will, and he obeyed, even though at last he left his bones to bleach in the baking sun, thus paying the utmost price to this heathen god that dwells in the desert fastness.

Such is the Great American Desert, covering the western half of Utah, and parts of Nevada and Arizona, where the scene of this story for the greater part is laid.

Although in many places the desert has laid such a scorching hand upon the earth as to make it absolutely barren for hundreds of square miles, yet it is checkered with fertile places, fed by water holes that escape the treacherous sands and make an Eden of the places where they lie. Nowhere upon the face of mother earth does the soil yield greater return than upon the fertile indentations of this vast waste.

The Mormon was early to discover these fertile spots along the desert and appropriate them for himself. Other emigrants too sought them out, until to-day some of the best ranch land in the West is in Utah.

What nature did not do, man has sought to accomplish by irrigation. The most heroic and gigantic of these schemes is the

mighty Roosevelt Dam, just completed in Arizona, which will irrigate an area as large as some of the New England States.

Much of this plateau, however, is broken by majestic mountain ranges. Thus in parts of Nevada, the traveler threads his way through deep canyons, between beetling cliffs, through scenery where one scarce dares to speak lest he disturb the solemnity and mystery of the scene,—fastnesses, where God seems to walk among His mountain tops, and where the Spirit of Silence seems forever to reside.

In Nevada, also, there is some of the finest timber to be found in the whole country, and here the government has large timber reservations. Ranging out and in through these timber reservations, living partly in the mountains and sometimes upon the plateau skirting them, grazing in the deep canyons, or in the green oases of the desert, is the largest drove of wild horses upon the

continent of North America, although it does not compare in size with the droves of wild horses in South America. This drove, although it is broken up into many smaller droves, and is scattered over a large area, is said by the government timber rangers to number over fifty thousand head.

Some of this stock may date as far back as the days of Spanish Conquest and Pizzaro's precipitate flight from Mexico, when he left some of his horses behind. But the herd has been augmented from time to time by the horses that have strayed away from the many adjacent ranches. Thus has the size and quality of the wild horse been kept up to a fair standard. The wild horse if left to himself, without new blood, is apt to degenerate, to become stunted, and no longer beautiful.

Because of the fact that domestic horses are constantly straying away to the wild herds, the ranchman considers the wild

horse the greatest menace that he has to contend with; so he shoots this outlaw at sight, and instructs all his cow punchers to do the same. For this reason the timber rangers are instructed by the government to kill all the wild horses that they can. Thus the horse, which is, in his domestic state, the best ally that man has in the animal creation, is an outlaw, hunted like the wolf, and hated by the rancher as he hates no other wild beast.

Down from its source in the Santa Rosa Mountains, where it is fed by perennial springs, and from snow-capped heights, curving about the feet of dizzy peaks, and threading its uncertain way through deep canyons, running broad and turbulent where the earth is clayey or rocky and will hold its current, and then almost lost in the sweeping sands that drink and drink, and drink, and are never sated, runs the Bad Medicine River, on its way to Lake Humbolt.

One would know that it was an alkali stream by the crusty-like formation upon the banks, even before he tasted its bitter waters. But once tasting he will not come for a second drink unless he be very thirsty.

It is ten o'clock of a moonlight night in August in the Silver King Canyon. The place is called for the Silver King Mine, which never filled its owner's expectations except in name.

The moon stands like a brilliantly-painted disc of reddish gold above the sky-line of the Altrura Mountain Range. Not a breath of air is stirring. The sky is as cloudless as though a drop of rain had never fallen in this parched land. It is as still as though the very centre and circumference of silence were located in the canyon. Bad Medicine River is at its lowest ebb, and here it has almost disappeared at the sandy bottom of the canyon. What water is still running slips silently between the sandstone as

though fearful of disturbing the stillness of the place.

Presently, upon this strange silence, so intense as to be painful, breaks the high-keyed squeal of a horse; not a whinny, low and musical, but the higher-keyed whistle, with a challenge in it,—a clarion note of alarm or defiance. It cuts through the silence like a two-edged sword, and awakes echoes that reverberate from mountain to mountain, thrown backward again and again until it would seem that a dozen horses had neighed and set as many echoes ringing. Then the echoes grow fainter and fainter, and once more silence.

Five minutes pass, and then that high-keyed stallion's call again reverberates in the silent canyon. When it has died away and silence again reigns, there comes the sound of rattling pebbles and slipping sand and down the primeval gorge a wonderful wild horse comes trotting.

His head is up, his eyes are like two bright stars, his heavy tail and mane float out behind as he comes, his crest is arched and he steps like a king. King he really is of the great herd of wild horses of Nevada,—a buckskin of about ten hundredweight, for the wild horses are smaller than domesticated horses. Even he is larger than most of his herd, for only two generations back his sire was a famous stallion who escaped from a ranch in Southern Utah to cast in his lot with his wild kindred.

Now the King has stopped and is sniffing the air suspiciously.

These wild horses have regained the cunning that is the natural endowment of all wild things, and they are very keen of scent and also quick to see and sense danger. Cattlemen say that they are harder to stalk and shoot than an antelope.

Yes, there is a taint in the air. His good

nose has not deceived him. Presently his ear too comes into play, for faint and far away, so indistinct that a man could hardly have heard it, his challenge is answered from far down the canyon.

He waits in that proud, defiant attitude, just as a king should wait. If any of his underlings want aught of him they must come to him, and not he go to them. That is not the way of kings.

Now the sound comes nearer. The echoes take it up, and repeat the answering call of his rival, flinging it from cliff to cliff. This call, too, is a high-keyed squeal in which is battle.

Now the advancing stranger also comes out into the moonlight, and is disclosed. He is a piebald stallion or pinto, with a long, shaggy coat, that proclaims him a wild horse for many generations. He is not so shapely as the King. His neck is cut away under the chops like that of a

sheep, his tail and mane are light, and his head is small and not well shaped. Yet he is a bundle of steely muscles and strong sinews; a fighting, kicking, squealing terror from the wild herd. The only stallion in many a league that does not flee for his life at even the sight of the King, who is a despot, killing all who do not admit his Kingship without parley or question.

The pinto, who is rather smaller than the King, approaches to within one hundred paces and stands eyeing his adversary with blazing eyes.

And there they stand in the clear moonlight eyeing each other for several minutes,—two sentient, quivering fighting-machines, hatred blazing from their eyes, hot breath whistling from their distended nostrils, the King not deigning to begin the battle, and the pinto not wishing to, but willing to fight if put to it.

Does the horse fight? I hear the reader

ask. Can that gentle animal fight like a wild beast?

Yes, like the wildest of wild beasts. He can fight as almost no other male can fight for his supremacy of the herd which is his harem.

Cattlemen and frontiersmen will tell you that of all the blood-chilling sights that they have ever witnessed, that of an infuriated stallion walking toward a man upon his hind legs, his eyes blazing like two coals, his jaws clicking like a bear-trap, his fore legs working like a windmill, is the most terrible.

Advantages there were upon both sides in this coming battle, so it would have been hard to have picked the winner. The King had weight upon his side, and he looked much more muscular than the pinto, but weight often makes an animal slow in his movements, which is certainly a disadvantage in a fight where dexterity is one's shield and buckler.

The broncho had the trick that all wild horses have, of striking with his fore feet, an accomplishment that a domestic horse rarely attains.

Finally, after considerable parleying and many feints and starts upon the part of the piebald, he began circling slowly about the King, who merely turned to meet him as he circled, not wishing to let him get behind him.

At last being annoyed by these tactics the King charged, and the battle was on in earnest. As the King came in range the pinto wheeled with a motion like lightning and lashed out at him, missing his broad chest by a hair's breadth, one hoof scraping along his glossy shoulder. The King in his turn tore a good piece of flesh from the broncho's flank, inflicting a deep flesh wound, which really did no harm. From this point on, it would be hard to describe the battle. There were so

many wild plunges, so much rearing, kicking and biting.

Twice the pinto punished the King severely with his fore hoofs, raking them sharply down his shoulders with telling effect, leaving the skin in ribbons, while the King in turn landed both heels upon the pinto's side, leaving him with two broken ribs, the most serious wound inflicted yet.

The combat was accompanied by a medley of sounds,—the rattle of sand and pebbles, the sharp click of hoofs upon larger stones, the squealing of the infuriated animals, the sharp snap of their teeth like the click of a bear-trap. Back and forth the battle surged. Now the King drove his adversary and then he gave ground, even though he was a King. Their breathing became labored as the battle grew in intensity, and at last it came in whistles and gasps. Foam dropped from their muzzles. Blood and

sweat flecked their sides, and the air was filled with flying sand. Gradually they came closer and closer. There were fewer feints and retreats, and more desperate fighting. Punishment each was willing to take if he could punish his adversary. Finally it narrowed down to a circle of perhaps fifty feet, and there was a constant rain of terrific blows. Faster and faster they struck, rearing and plunging constantly. It was hard to tell which had the better of the fight, for both were being terribly battered up. The King had received two blows for the pinto's one, but his blows were the most telling. Whenever his sledge-hammer hoofs struck they bit deep and left broken bones, and gaping wounds, at the place of contact.

It is hard to tell how the battle might have ended. Quite probably both might have been killed, as is often the case in such a fight, had not the King planted a

lucky blow that broke his adversary's fore leg just below the knee, leaving it dangling helplessly. After this the battle was no longer in doubt. The pinto could not avoid the King's attacks as he had done before. Dexterity had been his trump card, and with that power gone he was at the King's mercy.

But mercy the King had none, for mercy is not a quality of kings, be they brute or human. Steadily he bore the pinto to earth, landing broadside after broadside, knocking him to his knees again and again, only to have him rise and fight on. Like a Spartan the broncho fought, yielding because he could not help it, but dying inch by inch. His chest was pounded to jelly, and at last his shoulder was broken.

Then the King reared high in air and brought his pile-driving hoofs fairly down upon his fallen adversary's neck, breaking

it half-way between the head and the shoulder, and the pinto stretched out on the sands, and struggled no more.

Up and down over his prostrate body the victorious King waltzed, kicking, biting, squealing, stamping and raging, a demon of vengeance. For half an hour he raged back and forth, grinding his fallen foe into the sand, breaking his bones, and pounding his sinews and muscles to pulp. Little by little, however, his rage subsided, and he ceased to prance and stamp upon the dead pinto. Finally, he stooped and smelled him, and being fully satisfied that the last spark of life had left him and that he could no longer move even a muscle in defiance, he turned and trotted up the canyon the way he had come, evidently well satisfied with the outcome of the battle.

Fainter and fainter grew the echoes of his hoofs, until at last they entirely died away, and that breathless stillness again

reigned,—a stillness that well fitted the hour and the place, not to mention the gruesome form of the dead and mangled horse, which the coyotes would find on the morrow. A feast for the scavenger was all that was left of the splendid pinto.

CHAPTER II

LITTLE PIEBALD

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LITTLE PIEBALD

THE morning following the desperate combat between the King and the piebald stallion, the triumphant but much battered King might have been discovered about three miles above the head of Silver King Canyon, peacefully grazing with a bunch of about a dozen of his favorite mares.

Like other kings, he had his favorites among the opposite sex. About a dozen of the finest, largest mares, those that had most recently cast their lot with the wild herd, deserting their home ranches, he had claimed for his own. The King was a judge of beauty in his kind, and his little bunch of favorites would have done credit to any stock farm.

Presently the watchful King, who con-

stituted himself a sort of protector of his band, heard the clatter of hoofs coming from the direction of the canyon, and soon a dark chestnut mare, closely followed by a piebald colt, of about four months, and a perfect picture of the dead pinto in the canyon below, came into sight.

At first the King noticed only the mare, whom he had missed from his harem over a year before, when she had deserted him, and given her allegiance to the pinto. This fact had been the "causus bellæ" between the two stallions ever since, and the underlying cause of the death struggle in the gorge below; although stallions are willing enough to fight such battles even when there is not a favorite mare in question.

The King whinnied and trotted forward to meet his old favorite, his rage of the night before and her treachery being forgotten in his momentary triumph. He had nearly reached her when he caught

sight of little Piebald trotting behind the mare. As I have already said, the little colt was a perfect picture of the piebald stallion that the King had slain the night before.

Perhaps it was this resemblance that brought a sense of the King's injuries back to his brute mind, or maybe it was only that he recognized in the small horse, who was a male, a possible rival in years to come; certain it was, as the phrase goes, the King saw red at the sight of the little horse, and from being a confident whinnying suitor for the mare's favor, he became an infuriated male, one whose right of ownership had been usurped, and who had been thrown over for a garish calico horse, even though he was the sleek-coated King.

He charged furiously at the mare, snapping at her with vicious jaws and even whirling to kick when he came in range; but the worst of his rage fell upon the inno-

cent little Piebald. Like a demon the King charged him, rearing in air and bringing down his death-dealing hoofs, where the colt had been but a second before, and missing him only by a hair's breadth.

Seeing her offspring's life in imminent peril, the mare rushed between the colt and the King, taking the brunt of his punishment herself. Skilfully she guided the running fight toward the timber line which was near at hand. Once little Piebald lost a large patch of skin from his shoulder, which was torn away by the infuriated King, but colt and dam finally escaped in the timber that grew thickly, where the King could not pursue them to advantage.

This was the gaudy little colt's first experience with the stern mandate, that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon their offspring. The only offense that he was guilty of was that of resembling the dead pinto; but this was enough for the

King. True, it was merely circumstantial evidence, but it was enough to convict him in the jealous eyes of the King. He was a part of the conspiracy to rob him of his own, and not to be tolerated.

So little Piebald was outlawed upon the range of the King's mares. He could not venture in sight of the King even under the escort of his mother. He was offensive to the sight of the tyrant who ruled that region with a despot's power,—the power of might, which exacted the penalty always paid in the wild for unpardonable offenses, the price of death.

Many a race for his life the King gave the unfortunate little horse. Sometimes his mother was near by to help him to escape; but occasionally he would be caught unprotected, and on such occasions his only course was flight to the nearest cover.

When the King charged him, he would

stick his great homely head straight out in front of him to the utmost length of his neck, lay his large ears back, and work those large jointed awkward legs of his for all there was in them, his ridiculous brush of a tail fairly sticking up with fright, and his great eyes bulging out of his head from the same cause. In a straightaway run he was no match for the King, but he doubled and twisted, ran in and out among the rocks, and always eluded his would-be slayer at last, although he had many a hair-breadth escape, and was usually so winded that he could but gasp for minutes after the desperate chase.

He had no peace, but was ever on the watch. He could not nibble the grass-heads with the abandon of the other colts, or even enjoy his mother's udder, for that peril of the King always lurked in waiting for him. When he least expected him he was most sure to appear, for the King was

cunning and he was bent on killing little Piebald.

The school of nature is a hard one, but its lessons are learned well by her wild creatures. The weak and the foolish die young, and those that survive and perpetuate the kind are strong and self-reliant. It is a stern doctrine, this survival of the fittest, but it works well in perfecting the species.

Thus little Piebald, trained in the hard school of the wilderness, where the penalty of folly and disobedience is death, where the wild creature often has but one chance, and if it fails to make good in that one time returns to dust; thus the awkward, homely little colt, moulded in this desperate school, became as self-reliant as an old horse before he was a year old. No ear was quicker than his to hear the approach of danger, and his eye was as keen as the King's own. Not only was he quick to

detect danger, but he gradually became fleet of foot.

When one has to run for one's life nearly every day of the year, one learns to be fleet. Even the plodding turtle might learn fleetness under such circumstances. His gait was not stylish. One usually does not stop to think of style when he is running for his life. His principal anxiety is to get over the ground.

So it came about that little Piebald became a wonder for speed as a colt. When he stretched himself out to the earth, his homely head thrust forward for greater speed, and his loose joints working frantically, even the King himself could gain little upon him in the open where there was fair play for both.

Once the little horse understood his power, and found that the King could not catch him in a fair race, he no longer skulked for his life. There was something of the fight-

ing spirit of his sire about him, and he kept just out of the King's reach, seeming to enjoy taunting him, and not unwilling to play the desperate game of being chased by the infuriated stallion.

Probably nature did not intend by this strenuous training to make of little Piebald the fleetest wild horse upon the range; but that was just what she accomplished, and in the shortest possible time.

The most serious loss that befell little Piebald occurred when he was about eight months old, and this bereavement threw him entirely upon his own resources.

It was during the second month of winter. Winter in this diversified country is as varied as the country itself. Upon the high mountain tops there will be a great fall of snow, while at the same time down in the valley the ground will be nearly, or entirely bare. There may also be freezing

temperature upon the mountain chains, while in the valleys it will be comparatively warm. Thus it often happens that during an extreme cold spell the hunting in the mountains will become bad, and those most dreaded of all American hunters, the mountain lions, will come down into the valley to prey upon the ranchmen's stock.

The wild horses usually wintered for at least a part of the time in the timber belts along the edges of the high plateau-like lands, which were their grazing grounds. They still fed upon the plains, but sought the timber that skirted them for protection from the wind and cold.

Thus it happened that during a long cold snap in early January the lions came down from their lairs in the mountains in unusual numbers, and attacked the small bands of wild horses, while they shivered in the timber along the sides of the foot-hills, and

thought themselves only menaced by the biting winds and the nipping cold.

One moonlight winter night little Piebald and his mother were browsing in a thin belt of aspens and ironwood. They were stripping the small twigs from the ends of the branches, much as a deer might have done. A strong wind blew up the mountainside, whistling mournfully in the leafless twigs. Dark, sinister shadows, almost as black as night, were chasing one another out and in among the tree trunks. An occasional evergreen stood out dark and threatening among the lighter colored trees.

Down through the dark shadows that so well shielded it, as noiseless as a shadow itself, crept a long, lank, sinuous figure. Its motions were the very embodiment of stealth. Its mighty paws fell as lightly upon the snow, as though they merely supported the weight of an ordinary house cat,

instead of the one hundred and fifty pounds of the tense muscles and quivering nerves of the great mountain lion. No twig ever cracked under those paws. No stone or dirt was ever dislodged by that stealthy tread. It smothered all sound upon the spot where it was laid.

This great cat was perhaps eight or nine feet from tip to tip, and of a tawny brown color. Its head was large, but not like that of the African lion, while its eyes gleamed through the gloom, like two burning fires of hatred and fury.

The mare and her foal were browsing with their heads toward the mountainside, and the strong wind at their backs, so there was no kindly scent to tell them of their peril. The first intimation that they had of the demon of destruction that stalked them under the forest gloom was when the form of the great cat was hurled like a catapult from an overhanging boulder, and

THE LION LANDED UPON THE MARE'S BACK

when, with claws extended, mouth wide open for the fatal bite at the neck, the lion landed upon the mare's back, bearing her to the earth, as though she had been a deer instead of a full-sized horse.

Slipping, sliding, and sprawling, biting, kicking, snarling and squealing, they slid down the hillside for at least two rods, and then by a desperate effort the mare gained her feet, the lion still clinging to her back. Frenzied with pain, for her sides were already dripping blood, and frantic with terror, for she recognized her peril instantly, the mare raced through the aspens for her life, hoping to scrape off her deadly rider.

But the great cat had no mind to be scraped off. He saw good eating just ahead, and his vitals fairly ached with hunger. He had been stalking these two for hours, hunting with that patience that only the desperately hungry show. To him, each step had been a slight ap-

proach to a full stomach. So he dug his claws deep into the mare's sides, sank his teeth deeper in her neck, and hung on with that desperation that the life and death game required.

It was a load that no horse could carry for long, especially when the lion had his favorite death grip. So squealing, kicking and plunging, running less and less surely, now stumbling and rising only to stumble again, the mare floundered, for perhaps a hundred yards, and then fell upon her side, never to rise again, while her mighty slayer ripped and tore at her throat until life had left her.

To little Piebald all this was so swift and terrible that for a moment he scarcely realized what had taken place. He saw the form of the mighty cat flash through the gloom and land fairly upon his dam. He heard the squealing and kicking, and the snarling of the lion, and then with bulging

eyes beheld the frantic flight down the hillside, and saw his mother borne to earth, to rise no more.

Then up the valley, on the wings of the cold winter wind, came a sound that he never forgot,—a sound that struck terror to his heart, and lent wings to his hoofs, a sound that cavalrymen say they often hear in their dreams, so haunting is it,—the unearthly squeal of a dying horse.

This was enough for the little horse, and it aroused in him that sense of fear and headlong flight that is the first safeguard to the young wilderness creatures,—that motive that leads them unconsciously to self-preservation. Frantically, without thought of obstacles, or boulders or crevasses, the colt raced for his life, leaping from point to point almost like a deer, his homely head thrust straight out in front of him, and his scrubby tail sticking up with fright. Nor did the distance that he covered soothe

his fears; they rather grew with each jump. He raced until his wind whistled through his nostrils like the breath of an old wind-broken horse. He ran until his sides were covered with sweat, and he was ready to drop.

At last, after nearly an hour's frantic running hither and thither, anywhere and everywhere so long as he did not go in the direction from which that terrifying squeal had proceeded, he luckily staggered into the midst of a bunch of mares that were resting for the night in a clump of cedars, where he stood panting and reeking, blowing and quivering, a terrified, motherless little horse.

CHAPTER III

LESSONS OF THE WILD

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About ten miles above the upper end of Silver King Canyon, and not far from the country drained by Bad Medicine River, was a rude shack, which was the headquarters for Hank Digbee, a tall, lank frontiersman, of the usual type.

Hank hailed from Missouri, and had drifted across the intervening states as inclination called him. During that time, which covered nearly twenty years, he had served in many capacities.

He had been a cow puncher, and a professional broncho buster; a mule driver in the mines and a miner; a prospector, and a stage driver; and all this time he had

been a hunter and a guide of no common skill.

He was lean and muscular, for the out-of-doors man rarely puts on any extra flesh, and his skin was as wrinkled and tanned as sun and wind could well make it. From being much with nature he was a silent man, who spoke in epigrams, but more often merely nodded his head, or jerked his thumb in this direction or that. For instance, if he wished to say that it was a fine morning, he would merely jerk his thumb at the rising sun, which was rimming the eastern mountain tops with crimson splendor, and smile, a pleasant mellow smile, that in itself expressed much. If he wished to call your attention to the fact that a storm was brewing he would jerk that same expressive thumb toward the threatening point in the heavens, and shrug his shoulders, and the movement said plainer than words, "Look there, my

friend, we are going to get something from that quarter shortly, or my name is not Hank Digbee."

I have already said that the little shack, built of small cedars, was Hank's head-quarters, and that is the only way I can qualify his abode in that region, for he came and went like the wind, as noiselessly and as mysteriously. Not that there was really any mystery about his vocation, as there sometimes is about frontiersmen, for Hank, at this particular time in his life, was a timber ranger, in the employ of the government; but he had that peculiar trick of the woodsman of appearing and disappearing without sign or sound. His coming was as silent as the coming of dawn, and he melted away into the gray gloom of the forest, once he had struck camp, like a shadow. Nor could he tarry long in a place, for he ranged over nearly a thousand square miles, and when one must visit

nearly every portion of such a large area every two or three months, he must be up and doing, and cannot light his camp-fire too many nights in the same spot.

Hank's particular duties were to see that none of the government timber was cut and stolen; to put out small forest fires, or cause them to be put out; to report from month to month any irregularities in the life of the forest, such as diseases among the trees; and to estimate growth and condition of timber. He was also a sort of warden of the region and hunted certain animals which the government designated as vermin and upon which they paid bounties. Under this class came foxes, wildcats, lynxs; but more especially to Hank's mind, wolves, and bears, and mountain lions, upon which the bounties were large. The local ranchmen also paid a good bounty for the scalps of wild horses; so that altogether Hank earned nearly as

much money with his rifle, hunting what vermin came his way as he journeyed from point to point, as he received from the government for his services as timber ranger.

It was from Hank's rifle that little Piebald got his first smell of powder and his first taste of lead. It happened when he was about a year old, and not so well versed in the ways of the wilderness as were his full grown kindred.

Piebald was standing upon a slight ridge clearly outlined against the sky-line, where the sun was just setting. He was a good mark, although from his position, nearly three hundred yards away across the valley, Hank could not make him out. The colt by this time was about a third grown, and his peculiar coloring made him look like some kind of a freak deer, or so Hank thought.

"Perhaps I can size that ar critter up better if it gits a move on ter itself," he

said, and sighting the rifle for three hundred yards, took a rather hasty aim for so long a distance, and fired.

The forty-five ninety bullet went hurtling on its way across the intervale, singing its high-keyed death song. The large calibred gun woke startling echoes in the quiet valley, and the bluffs on either side tossed them back again and again. The malicious bullet threw up a cloud of dust beneath the colt's belly but did no other harm.

Piebald sprang into the air and snorted, but was uncertain which way to flee, the echoes played him such pranks. While he hesitated Hank threw the lever upon his Winchester and the second bullet went singing after the first.

This time his aim was better and the missile bit deep into the colt's flank, inflicting a flesh wound.

This was enough for the colt. He now

located the tiny puff of smoke across the valley, the one strange thing on the landscape, and he fled in the opposite direction, going as frantically as a frightened buck might have done.

"'Tain't no deer," ejaculated Hank. "Guess it is a broncho colt. Mighty curus lookin' leetle cuss anyhow."

Piebald had gotten his taste of lead, and half an hour later when the strong evening wind brought the smell of gunpowder into the cedar thicket where he had taken refuge, he had his first smell of pungent powder smoke, although he was destined to smell enough of it in after years.

The following day he saw this same puff of smoke at a great distance, and was enabled by his keen sight to connect with it a tall, erect figure, which was like nothing that he had ever seen before. So he was able to associate the four things together. The tiny puff of smoke, the deafening

noise, the biting, burning thing that made his flank bleed, and made him go lame for several days, and the tall, erect figure in the distance. All these things Piebald learned to associate one with another, and the sum total that they footed up was danger. So whenever he discovered any one of them, and his sight and hearing were very keen, he ran as far and as fast in the opposite direction as he could. In this stage of his development flight was his only strategy. He had not learned to use judgment. His only way of avoiding danger was to flee away from it, and this he did with speed that no other horse on the range, in a score of miles, could equal.

More from his conspicuous color, which piqued the curiosity of the ranger, than because he really cared to shoot the colt, Piebald was in danger whenever Hank came into his particular portion of the range. From being several times shot at, and twice

slightly wounded, the colt became as shy as any deer, and even quicker than a deer to see or hear his foe. His sense of smell was not as good as a deer's, and far inferior to that of a fox or wolf. It is these smaller creatures belonging to the dog family that have the keenest sense of smell.

But the two slight flesh wounds which the colt received at the hands of Hank were as nothing compared with another wound that he got from a much more clumsy enemy. From this experience he learned a very valuable lesson,—that of considering all things dangerous that have not been proven harmless.

In the ranch portions of Nevada bears were quite plenty. The cattle were much easier to stalk than were the wild horses that inhabited the timber belts, and of course the bears went where the easiest hunting was to be found.

So bear was not a part of little Piebald's

education, although he had seen one or two at a distance. As they did not molest him, however, or even appear to see him he concluded that they were harmless, if he concluded anything about them. It is quite probable too that the bears in question did not see him, as Bruin's eyesight is very poor, and he depends largely upon his hearing and sense of smell. So it was a combination of circumstances, just such as life in the wilderness is made up of, that enabled Bruin to get within striking distance of the colt.

He was trotting along through a narrow defile between the rocks in the upper end of Silver King Canyon. This was a trail that was much used by the herd in going from one range to another. He had reached the narrowest portion, where the way was barred on one side by a steep cliff and on the other by the trunk of a large fallen tree, when he noticed a new taint in the

air. Horse that he was with feeble smellers, yet he could detect that odor. It was musty and pungent and like nothing else that he had ever smelled. It made him uneasy, for it seemed to come from ahead, and he was just about to turn and go back, when a huge black bear suddenly reared up from behind the tree and aimed a mighty blow at the colt's back, trying for that vital spot just at the loin.

Had the blow fallen true, Piebald's story would have ended then and there, but it fell a little short, and laid open his rump to the bone, but did not break either the hip or the backbone. With a squeal of pain and terror that made the canyon ring with echoes, the frightened, half-paralyzed colt sprang away up the trail, terror and pain adding speed to his badly crippled hind parts. He was just in time to avoid the bear's second blow, and although he left a trail of blood behind, yet he escaped

with his life, which was a miracle when we consider how close his deadly enemy got for his mighty blow.

It was days before the gaping wound came together, and weeks before it finally healed. And all that time Piebald went with a bad limp that made him easy prey for all his other enemies; but he had learned the lesson of bear for all time. After that the slightest whiff of bear scent or even a very distant sight of that clumsy figure would set him running for hours; while a tree that a bear had used as a rubbing post was enough to strike terror to the colt, especially if the bear had left some of his black coat in the bark, to make the scent strong enough not to be mistaken.

A more amusing, and less dangerous incident, Piebald had with a buck while he was still a colt about a year old. Deer were not very plenty in the vicinity, but a few inhabited about the same range that the

wild horses did, ranging partly on the high mesas, and partly in the timber belts along the foot-hills.

The buck espied Piebald one morning where he was grazing in a little open glade, and came prancing toward him, probably at first thinking he was a deer, some freak of nature that had been thrust upon the family, and not to its credit.

Piebald gazed at the prancing stranger with some annoyance. The buck was so slight that he did not look formidable, but the colt could not make out the peculiar branching formation of his head. This was like no other animal that he had ever seen. But the feed was good in this particular spot, and the colt was hungry, so he kept on with his breakfast feeling quite sure that the stranger, whoever he might be, would not molest him.

His astonishment however was considerable when without warning the buck

waltzed up to him and planted a stinging blow upon his shoulder, striking with his fore foot. But the deer, who by this time had discovered that the feeding colt was no deer, was equally surprised when Piebald struck back with his fore foot. He did not quite reach the nimble buck who had sprung as soon as he struck, but the blow that he aimed at him was a slashing one and warned the buck of what he might expect if the colt once reached him.

At this point the buck drew off to consider. Striking with the fore feet he had thought an exclusive deer accomplishment, but here was a creature, who was certainly not a deer, who had learned the trick quite as well as he had.

Again he came bucking toward Piebald, who kept on with his feeding but watched him narrowly out of the corner of one eye, a trick that wild horses and mules have learned to perfection. This time the deer

sought to take him in the rear, and came bucking up to the attack as before. His astonishment was unspeakable however when Piebald lashed out with both hind legs, barely missing his head, and breaking off one of the prongs of his antlers.

But astonishment soon gave way to rage, and he again sought to punish the colt in the rear. The second time Piebald had better luck and he landed both heels fairly in the buck's side, sending him sprawling. This was enough for the deer, who, had he understood his advantage, could have easily worsted the colt. But this thing he did not understand. Here was a creature who was not a deer that could strike with his fore feet, a deer prerogative, and who also could strike with his hind feet as well, something that even the most accomplished buck rarely tried. Surely, he wanted naught of him. So he scrambled to his feet, and went off up the hillside covering the

ground with leaps that astonished the colt as he looked wonderingly after him.

But the incident was closed as far as any trouble between the two in the future was concerned, for whenever the buck espied Piebald feeding after that he made a respectful détour.

One of the most exciting incidents of Piebald's colthood, and that which most nearly cost him his life, happened when he was perhaps a year and a half old. This was when the gray pack discovered him and undertook to run him down.

Wolves were not very plenty in Nevada. Sometimes they would entirely disappear for several years, and then, as is their nomadic custom, would suddenly reappear. This year a small pack of five members had appeared late in the autumn, in the range which the colt frequented, probably coming from southern Utah.

They espied the colt one morning at the edge of a plateau where he was browsing and silently gave chase. He saw them coming quite a distance away, but at first did not recognize his danger. Their gray forms were so inconspicuous, and fitted so well into the landscape that they did not even suggest a menace. They were loping along in that accustomed wolf gait, which does not scare the quarry and at the same time eats up the miles as almost no other gait does.

Presently they appeared for a moment at the edge of a cedar thicket at a point where the colt himself had been but half an hour before, going in just the same places that he had, and with their noses to earth, and the full significance of their movement was borne in on the colt. This swiftly moving gray menace, whatever it was, had found his trail and was following him rapidly. There is something about being trailed that

instinctively strikes terror to the heart of a wild beast. It seems to suggest some relentless force that will hunt them down. Thus often a larger creature will flee from a smaller, simply because it is pursued, when it is not really afraid.

But that wisdom which is not acquired, but inherited, told Piebald that this was a real danger, and he fled precipitately.

The pack did not race him madly but they kept persistently after him, galloping, galloping, galloping, always just so far behind, and never slacking their pace.

During the first hour or two of the chase Piebald could leave them far behind by his frantic galloping, but when he thought he had given them the slip and gotten so far away that they could not find him they would reappear, coming on as before at that relentless gallop. There was no eluding them. Twice he plunged through a creek at its greatest width, but the wolves

found a shallow spot and came jumping across on the stones, and were after him again. He plunged down deep gorges, and through the most dense cedar thickets that he could find, but of no avail. There was no place so rough, or so densely thicketed or so wet but that the gray pack could follow.

Sweat came out on Piebald's sides, and lather stood on his flanks, foam dripped from his nose, and his breathing grew labored, but still they pursued and still he fled, because there was nothing else to do.

Now they came more and more often in sight, until at last he could see them nearly all the time when he looked back, which he did constantly as the danger grew upon him. This relentless thing behind him was like a great weight, a force that he could not shake off, dragging him down to doom. This frenzy also helped the gray pack, for it caused him to race frantically for a while,

badly winding himself, and then to slow down nearly to a walk, because he could not move faster. This was not his best course. A long, steady stride would have carried him farther before he dropped, but he was young, and this thing behind him was like nothing that he had experienced before.

Finally, the gray pack drew in to within three or four rods, so near that he got their body scent, and saw their tall, gray forms with their gaunt sides, and gleaming, hungry eyes. But even now they did not hurry him unduly, for they were cunning hunters. They did not know how many good English miles he had left in him. Their plan was not to spurt and catch him in a mad race, but to wear him out, just as water wears away the stone, and leave him so helpless and spent at the last that he could not even raise a fore foot to strike when they pulled him down

Toward the middle of the afternoon this stratagem of the gray pack seemed nearly realized. Often the colt stopped, his head hanging, and only moved on when they came near and snapped at him. His race was nearly run. Two or three miles, or at least a half dozen, and it would be safe for them to haul him down and pick his bones.

His breath now came in a continuous whistle. He was reeking with sweat and almost white with lather. His eyes bulged from their sockets and his head drooped. His splendid strength, his great fleetness, that had so often saved him from the vengeance of the King, had been as nothing before this relentless lope of the gray pack.

Feebly he stumbled on, blowing and panting, his strength all but spent. Ten minutes more, five minutes more and his hour would strike.

Just at this eventful moment in his life, the all-but-done-for Piebald stumbled out

upon a small mesa where he had often grazed. It was perhaps a mile across and in the middle of the plateau he discovered a band of a dozen stallions feeding.

This band was the terror of the range. They were a band of disgruntled males who had been unsuccessful in getting a bunch of mares to run with, and so perhaps, because misery likes company, had banded themselves together.

Usually a band of wild horses consists of a dozen or twenty mares, and one stallion, who is its despot and King, but this bunch had gone to the other extreme and was all stallions. All biting, kicking, disgruntled terrors of the plains, from whom Piebald would have usually fled as he did from the wolf pack now. But the terror behind took away all thought of the danger ahead, and as soon as he made them out he strained every nerve and muscle to reach the stallion band. Surely there was no choice between

being torn to pieces by wolves, and kicked to death by his own kind. The wolves also probably saw the stallions, and put all their speed into the chase, something they had not done before.

When the frantically racing colt and the galloping gray pack came within a score of rods of the feeding stallions, they suddenly bunched and stood with their heads together and their heels out in a bristling circle. On came Piebald and the wolves, and the only sign that the bunch made was to draw closer together, and to lay back their ears, and draw up their lips. Suddenly, as Piebald reached a point within fifty feet of the herd, as though a door to safety had opened, their solid ranks parted, and he galloped into the very heart of the bunch, where there was a little open spot, and as suddenly as the door had opened it closed, leaving a circle of heels unbroken for the gray pack to face.

But they had no mind to face that phalanx of death-dealing heels. Real danger they were quick to recognize. So when they came within fifty feet of the circle they stopped and with wrinkled lips, and gleaming teeth sat down upon their haunches to consider. For perhaps five minutes they sat thus watchful, but baffled, hoping for something to happen that would drive Piebald again into their power, but nothing did. So they reluctantly turned and trotted away into the gloom of the cedars, and Piebald saw them no more.

Although they jostled him about rather rudely and put back their ears to him, and even bit at him, yet the outlaw stallions did Piebald no harm, and after that day he came and went in their midst whenever he wished, and was treated as a horse, if not as an equal.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAND OF THE NAVAJOS

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THE Navajos are children of the desert. Desert born and bred they have been for more generations than the white man's history records in that desert portion of his country.

They are not as warlike as most of the American Indians. They were among the first, after the Aztecs, to come under the Spanish influence. Not that they learned any virtue from the Spaniard, but they copied some of his ways, and this possibly tended to make them more civilized.

To-day they wander over the American desert all through Arizona, and sometimes into the southern portions of Utah and Nevada, driving their flocks of sheep with

them wherever they go, seeking the best feed for their flocks, and a change of scene, and good hunting which is a necessity to all Indians, be they ever so civilized. Very few of their villages are permanent, although they frequently return to a favorite camping-place, or range, and occupy the adobe houses that they builded a year or two before.

To them the desert is home, both the gray sage-brush and greasewood desert of Utah and Nevada, as well as the more luxuriant arboreal desert of southern Arizona. We are accustomed to think of the desert as an arid waste, without color or any sign of life, but this is a greatly mistaken idea. The desert is usually highly colored, even though it be entirely void of vegetation. But in southern Arizona, a peculiar combination of trade winds bring moisture to that region both during the winter months when they would naturally get it, and also for about

two months in the summer; so that the Arizona desert often blooms like the rose, although its form of flora is almost worthless for all purposes except to look upon.

There are areas of hundreds of square miles along the tracks of the Southern Pacific Railroad where one may ride for hours and see a landscape literally covered with cacti,—cacti large and cacti small and of half a dozen different varieties. When we add to this the fact that almost no two plants of some of the varieties ever have the same colored blossom, but that these gigantic blooms are nearly all colors of the rainbow, we can get some idea of the gorgeousness of the scene, especially when beheld by moonlight. No matter how hot the desert is by day, even though the sands are so hot as hardly to be bearable to step upon, yet the nights are always cool and bracing, as though nature tried to make up by night for the cruel, torturous heat of the

day. All night long a fresh wind will blow across the desert waste, and the skies will be studded with great, luminous stars, so thick there would scarcely seem to be room for one more, and so low down as to seem almost within human reach.

Not only is the Arizona desert covered with many beautiful varieties of cacti ranging in height from three to twenty feet, but it also abounds with the Palo Verde, the greenest of trees, and the mesquite, similar in character; while all the waste spots, which are not otherwise occupied, are covered with greasewood, or creosote bush, and sage-brush, nature's apology for waste places.

Nor is the desert entirely free of animal life, for its sands swarm with fleas, while lizards, horned toads, and rattlesnakes, jack-rabbits and coyotes, have chosen the desert for their habitat. Often the cry of the coyote is heard in the very heart of the

desert, while the desert hawk sails untroubled through the intense blue sky.

While there are no watercourses that thread the desert yet there are occasional water-holes, moist places in the sands where the water stands, and vegetation is luxuriant.

Altogether it is a free, careless, happy life that the Navajos live, wandering from place to place, living here to-day and there to-morrow, taking the sweet and leaving the bitter.

Their sheep, that provide the wool from which the squaws weave those wonderful blankets that the white man with all his machinery has never been able to duplicate, are their chief means of subsistence. So all their trails are sheep paths. Often the shepherd rides upon a small burrow, for they are lazy, like all Indians.

Their permanent abodes are called hogans, which is another name for the adobe house

of this region. It has a wooden frame of small cedar or mesquite timbers, the ends of which may often be seen protruding through the clay. This frame is covered with a red clay which the sun bakes until it is nearly as hard as brick. In these adobe houses the chiefs sit and smoke before their fires, for the Navajo loves warmth, while his many wives weave the blankets, the hand-manipulated shuttles flying in and out so rapidly that the eye can scarcely follow them, while that wonderful soft blanket grows steadily beneath the rude loom. It is a picture of lazy content, of an indolent race in a portion of the earth where it is so warm and nature provides so much that there is little inducement to labor.

Eagleheart was the son of a chief of a small band of Navajos that roamed through the northern portion of Arizona, and occasionally upon some special errand into southern Nevada, or even into the south-

western corner of Utah; but their usual beat was northern Arizona.

The entire village numbered perhaps five hundred, which together with about a thousand sheep and three hundred ponies, that they drove with them wherever they went, made quite a goodly showing.

Whenever they were located in a certain adobe village, which was one of their more permanent camps, the women were hard at work with those wonderful blankets that have made this tribe of Indians celebrated all over the world. Sheep-shearing time was also another busy season with the Navajos, but most of the year was taken up with aimless wandering over the more fertile portions of the great Desert, where there was feed for both sheep and ponies.

At certain seasons of the year hunting parties went on a long journey into the Santa Rosa Mountains. Also once or twice each year, a special band went into

Nevada to replenish their horses from the wild bands that frequented that state.

The Navajos were the most successful trainers of wild horses of any of the Indian tribes in the Southwest, and the most skilful of all their number was Eagleheart.

Besides making him son of a chief, and consequently a chief himself some day, if he made good, nature had blessed him in other ways, for he was a wonderful warrior to look upon.

He was as tall as a young palm, as graceful as the willow, and as stout of heart and limb as the oak. He was a consummate horseman, and a deadly shot, with either bow, rifle, or revolver.

Five years have now passed since the opening chapter of this book. Time, the omnivorous, who is no respecter of persons, had wrought sad changes in the fortunes of the King of the wild horse band, who formerly ruled with such despotic sway.

All this had been because of Little Piebald. If there had been no piebald colt of course it would have happened in time, but not so soon. His enmity toward the little horse was the eventual means of the King's undoing.

For the first year the colt had skulked for his life, running like a deer whenever the King appeared. Then for the next year, when he had become nearly as fleet as the King himself, he lurked upon the outskirts of the King's range, within sight and hearing, but just out of reach. Defiant, yet watchful, ready to run when he had to, but not willing to run until he was obliged to.

During the third year his attitude became even more defiant. Now he would not run at all when the King appeared, but if it came to too close quarters, he would put up a sort of running fight, keeping just out of the King's reach, often even kicking

or biting at him, but never coming to close quarters with him.

One thing was certain, Piebald was growing in confidence. Some day he would not run, but would stand as his sire had done in Silver King Canyon and fight to the finish.

During Piebald's fifth year, this time came. He was now grown to a compact stallion quite as heavy as the King, and even hardier, combining in a wonderful degree all the fine bred qualities of the domestic horse, with the hardihood and fearlessness of the wild horse. He had been in condition to fight the King to a finish any time during the last year, but the King's authority was a hard thing to shake off. He had ruled so long with such despotic power, that it was difficult to understand that he would not always be King. Piebald would not be ready to fight the King until he no longer feared him.

This hour came at last when in Piebald's

fifth year the King went very lame, from a sharp stone that had lodged in his fore foot. This put him at a disadvantage. Piebald was quick to notice it.

First he hectored the King, driving him from place to place, keeping him on the move all the time and enjoying his discomfort. This was just as it had been in the old days, only the tables were turned. Formerly the King kept him continually upon the move, and now he made the King pay in the same coin.

This worrying went on for several days, when at last the King's patience gave out. He was still a King at heart, if he did limp, and he whirled and faced Piebald to fight to the finish,—to be a King again, or go down to defeat. Anything was better than this constant worrying.

The fight was as long and as desperate as that in which the King had killed his sire. Piebald was the stronger and quicker,

but the King had sent many a stallion to death, and he knew the game much better than the younger horse. Back and forth the battle raged for an hour, now one having the advantage and then the other. All through the fight until almost at the last the King punished the younger stallion more than he was punished. For every blow that he received he gave two, but Piebald was as tough as the ironwoods among which he so often browsed. He could stand punishment. As long as the King broke none of his legs he could fight on with unabated fury. Battering and bruising were nothing to him.

But on the King every wound told. He was a little past his prime, although a fine specimen of a horse. Ordinarily he would have been a fit ruler for his bunch of mares for several years more, but his own cruelty and vengefulness had bred in Piebald an adversary that would not let him rest.

Now that both were suited to reign, one must die. There could not be two Kings in so small a kingdom.

Finally after nearly an hour of desperate fighting the King began to weaken, and seeing his advantage the younger stallion redoubled his efforts. He was surcharged with hate. All the insults and injuries that he had suffered from the King boiled up in him like a geyser. He became a demon of vengeance. Before such a hate-inspired adversary the King, whose temper had grown cold with the years, could not long stand; little by little he weakened, until he at last was borne to earth, never to rise again. He had received the portion that he had administered to so many. He had paid the price for being a despot, and gone the way of despots.

With the death of the old King, Piebald became King of the little bunch of fine mares that his predecessor always led. They

had become scattered in the last few days of the King's weakness, but Piebald with much gusto rounded them up and served notice upon them with many kicks and bites that henceforth he would be their King.

It was at this point in the fortunes of the new King that Eagleheart, and a band of his Navajo vaquero, came up Silver King Canyon, and camped at its head in a thicket of aspens and cedars. They were on one of their annual horse-catching expeditions and as usual had come to take toll from the wild horse bands of Nevada.

They had never come to just this region before, but were spying out the land. The new King and his fine bunch of mares were discovered the first day of their appearance, and the eye of Eagleheart flashed with eager fire when he beheld the piebald stallion for the first time. His motions were so free and strong. His air was so

proud and compelling, that the Indian knew him for a fine horse once he was caught and broken. Eagleheart also vowed by all the gods of the Navajos that he would ride the wild stallion within a week, and at once began making plans for his capture.

CHAPTER V

THE HAND OF EAGLEHEART

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EAGLEHEART lost no time in carrying out his plans for capturing the piebald stallion. His first thought was to run him down and rope him, and with this plan in view he selected a dozen of his finest, most skilful vaquero, and they rode over the surrounding country for ten miles, noting its possibilities. All the water-holes and arroyos were carefully located, and the favorite grazing ground of the King and his bunch of fine mares was also discovered.

That evening around a bright camp-fire they talked for an hour planning how they should rout the King out and then how they would keep him going. How to keep him out of bad country, and how always to

turn him back toward familiar ground. Well they knew if he once started on a cross-country run they would lose him for that time at least.

Early the following morning a half dozen lithe vaquero, with Eagleheart at their head, each mounted upon his favorite mustang, hardy ponies that knew the game as well as their riders, and each horseman armed with a fifty foot lariat, started forth to subdue the King upon his own range.

They had no difficulty in locating him, for Eagleheart had been watching him for several days already and knew all his haunts. But he was very wild and it was many hours before they could get within half a mile of him. The King's policy was to always mount some high ground while his mares were feeding, and there he would stand sentinel for hours watching on every side; and his scent, eyesight and hearing were all so keen that it was hard to get

within even a long distance of him. It was necessary to get somewhere near in order to follow him when the chase began, for this table-land was very uneven and one could not see long distances ahead.

The Indians resorted to the method, which is so common among their kind, of riding lying on the side of their mustangs, holding on with one foot and one hand. At first this fooled the King; but he very soon knew their mounts by sight and was off at his best pace as soon as they appeared.

His mares he evidently sent off to the northward, toward the high mountains, which are always the wild horses' last refuge, for the Navajos saw nothing of them after about noon, when they were seen going in that direction.

With them out of the way, the piebald stallion seemed to accept the challenge of the red men to run him down, for he no

longer appeared as wild as he had in the morning. He was now getting used to this game of tag and as long as the horsemen did not fire at him he let them come within a reasonable distance.

Finally at about two o'clock they had worked him into the country best suited for their purpose, and the tiring out process began. Back and forth they raced him at the best pace that their mustangs were capable of, playing into one another's hands, like wolves beating a cover for rabbits. Their plan was not to frighten him but to keep him running back and forth from mesa to mesa, and from one feeding ground to another as rapidly as possible, turning him back when they could if he started for bad land.

It was a part of their plan to drive him toward the water-holes as much as possible, and allow him time to drink. A horse when he is heavy from much drinking can-

not run nearly as well. But in this stratagem they failed, for Piebald was a desert bred horse. He knew as well as they did that it was not well to fill up too much when he wanted to keep up his best pace.

Eagleheart's desire to possess him grew each time he beheld him. His markings were so peculiar, a light cream splashed with bay, that he was very conspicuous. But it was not his color that made the Navajo's eye dance at the sight of him. It was his motion, the look of him, his action and his stride. His muscles played under the loose, glossy coat as smoothly as though the whole horse had been oiled that very morning for the run. There was, too, a sense of power, an indescribable something about him that told the young Indian that he was a horse in ten thousand. There was no tire out to him. He would go and go until other horses dropped from exhaustion, and then still keep on going. It was

a pleasure to him to stretch his muscles and lead them a race through these desert plateaus. He gloried in his strength as Eagleheart did in his. They were kin. Eagleheart was the greatest of all the Navajos, and here was the fleetest and the toughest of all the sixty thousand wild horses in Nevada,—a superb mount for the most skilful of vaquero,—and ride him he would.

When night-time came and the stars pricked through the desert sky the piebald stallion still carried his head as high as he had in the early morning. There was not the slightest sign of fatigue about him,—this notwithstanding the fact that two of the Navajo mustangs had gone lame.

Eagleheart was thoroughly convinced that they could not run down the King, or even get near enough to lasso him if they were to try a week. But his braves were for trying this method another day. They

were confident in their mustangs. So, as he delighted in seeing the wonderful wild horse run, Eagleheart gave in against his better judgment. He more than half expected that the stallion would make good his escape in the night, by following his mares and colts away to the mountain tops. This was what he would have done had he been a less spirited horse. But when they rode forth on the morrow they soon located him upon the range where they had left him the night before. He was standing upon a lava crest, clearly outlined against the morning sky. He was ready and waiting for them.

At the sight of him Eagleheart sprang to a standing position upon his mustang and saluted the wild stallion. Then, putting both hands to his mouth, he hallooed the war-cry of the Navajos across the mesa.

What a chase the King led them that day! They were wild, rough riders and had

seen hard riding before, but this eclipsed everything that any of them had experienced. Through sage-brush, chaparral, and chamiso the trail led,—into dark cedar thickets where it was so dense that they were obliged to dismount and lead their horses. Down steep canyons jagged with boulders, at a breakneck pace he led them. No rider went around obstacles that day. All were riding for their honor. The reputation of the Navajo vaquero was at stake. The wild horse seemed to divine that they would stop at nothing and so made the trail rough and the pace a headlong gallop.

Although the mustangs of the Indians were blown before noon, and they watered often, not once, as far as they could see, did the wild stallion put his lips to water that day. Neither did he browse, when they stopped to rest their horses. His head was always up, his nostrils extended, his eyes bright, his ears erect, and his whole

manner alive and awake to the danger and the joy of meeting it.

It was a sorry company of vaquero that limped back to camp that night, while the wonderful stallion scarce drooped his head at all. On the other hand three of the Navajo mustangs went lame, while others were perceptibly stiffened. Some of the riders were so sore from the continual jouncing that they preferred to walk leading their horses.

All were dispirited but Eagleheart. He was as full of fire and enthusiasm as ever. He gloried in the chase that the King had given them. Each time he had sighted him that day his longing for the horse had grown. Now he must have him at any cost.

That night he told his braves of a new plan, one that he felt sure would give them the prize. The following day they would form themselves into a drag-net and run the King into Silver King Canyon. Once

inside that natural corral, they could run the King down and rope him at their leisure.

To this plan the braves at once assented, for they had had enough of running him down in the open.

Accordingly on the following morning three of their number went to the lower end of the canyon where they stationed themselves to keep the King bottled up, once they should get him driven in from the upper end. They also fortified their position by dragging as many boulders and dead tree stumps to the spot as their aversion to work permitted.

Nine others Eagleheart took with him.

Even he expected to find the King gone this morning; but he had misjudged his mettle. This game of tag reminded Piebald of the days when the old King had chased him from range to range and he gloried in it. He was not going to run

away as long as there was such sport afoot. So there he was standing upon his hilltop, when they came forth to find him.

It was Eagleheart's plan to work Piebald rather than drive him into Silver King Canyon. They would move so slowly that the wild stallion would not for a moment understand that he was being driven. With this in view they made a very wide détour, some of them going two or three miles to the north and east. Then like a great drag-net they slowly closed in.

Piebald rarely saw more than one of them at a time, so his suspicions were not aroused. Perhaps a horseman would appear upon the crest of a swell in the plateau. He was usually motionless. The stallion would stand with head up and nostrils distended watching him for a few moments, and then would probably turn and trot off in the opposite direction. If he did not, the Indian would begin to walk his mustang slowly

toward him. None of the bronchos went out of a walk that day, and Piebald himself did nothing more than trot.

If Piebald started to make his way back toward the mountains where his little band of mares had gone, a silent horseman would suddenly appear in front of him. There was no noise or flurry on the part of the Indian. He was merely in the way.

Thus hour by hour, with that patience which the Indian and the woodsman know so well, they labored toward their destination. If Piebald wanted to stop at a waterhole he was allowed to do so. If he wished to stop for half an hour to graze, that too was permitted. Only when the stop was so long as to endanger their plans not being carried out by evening they would start him along. Thus rod by rod, he was driven toward Silver King Canyon, until about three o'clock when the entrance was reached.

Here the wild horse made a long stop and Eagleheart feared that he scented danger, but he did not dare to hurry him, for to scare him now would be to undo all that had been done through hours of patient waiting.

At last Piebald turned and trotted slowly down the canyon. He was tired of this silent, persistent dogging. There was no excitement or fun in it as there had been in the stern chases of the two days before. He would go through the canyon to another range further down and thus give them the slip.

As soon as he was out of sight Eagleheart and his braves rode forward rapidly and were soon at the canyon's mouth. Not until they had made a cordon of their ponies across it at a narrow place did Eagleheart feel secure. Then he knew that he had won. The stallion could not escape now, the prize was his. Silent redman that he

was he gave vent to a wild, exultant war-whoop, that went echoing down the defile.

It was not many minutes before the sound of swiftly galloping hoofs came to their ears, and Eagleheart called to his braves to hold tight and look out for he was coming. Each man was ready with his lariat.

If Piebald had attempted to break through their ranks then, he would have been entangled in half a dozen rawhide ropes, but he was wise and did not. He merely galloped up in sight of them and then stopped, his head held high. Alarm and defiance were in his movements. He had found that cordon at the southern end of the canyon.

After a few minutes of anxious watching he turned and trotted away to the southern end of the canyon again. Every foot of the walls from end to end he explored but all in vain. It was a perfect trap and he was caught, caught in a canyon perhaps a

mile in length, but not yet a captive by any means, not as long as he could kick and bite and strike with his fore feet.

Eagleheart ordered large camp-fires built so that it should be as light as day at each cordon. The fire would tend to keep the wild horse from attempting to break through, as he in common with other wild beasts feared fire. But half of the Navajos kept watch all night, taking turns so that they should be sure of their prize.

Piebald did not attempt to break through, but kept to the portion of the canyon halfway between the two cordons, not realizing his helpless condition. Twice or three times he came and stood at a distance watching the bright fires, but made no attempt to pass them.

Early the following day the process of making a captive of him began. Mounted upon their best mustangs four of the Indians took turns running him back and

forth through the canyon. One Indian would run him down from the northern cordon to the southern, where another Indian would take up the chase and run him back. By taking turns and riding hard they were able to keep him at a pounding gallop for hours. If he lagged they turned loose their forty-fours and they soon saw that he was terribly afraid of firearms.

In an hour he was reeking with sweat, and in another he was covered with lather; but still they kept him galloping. The canyon echoed with the crack of Colt revolvers, the yell of the Indians, and the metallic ring of hoofs upon stones.

By the fifth hour his head had begun to droop perceptibly and the sixth hour brought his tongue out.

Such endurance Eagleheart had never seen before. Piebald was running against six horses and all were reeking with sweat.

By one o'clock it was hard to keep him

moving, and unless they yelled and discharged their revolvers he would stand leaning against the cliffs, shaking as though he had the palsy. Another hour or two of this worrying process was kept up and then the wild stallion came to bay. He backed up against the solid wall and could or would go no further.

Eagleheart's hour had come. Now was his turn to show his skill with the lariat. He dismounted from his mustang and tied one end of his longest, strongest lariat around his waist. This was something that only the strongest and most skilful of wild horse trainers ever did. For when the time came he would have to make a human snubbing post of himself and withstand a terrible strain that would break the back of a man not made of steel.

Slowly he advanced toward the wild horse, watching his every movement, and especially his blazing eyes, just as one

boxer does another. The lariat was coiled in his hand ready for the throw.

When he was within about forty feet of the stallion Piebald made a move that the Navajo had hardly expected. He reared upon his hind legs like a circus horse and started for the Indian, his fore legs working like a windmill, his teeth clicking like a bear trap. Hate blazed from his blood-shot eyes. It was a sight to freeze the blood in the veins of most men, but Eagleheart did not quail. Instead his arm shot out like a flash and the lariat went writhing through the air, its deadly honda sliding fairly over the stallion's fore legs, catching him above the knees. With a sudden sidewise jerk the Indian tightened the noose.

With a snarl like an infuriated camel Piebald came down on all fours, his jaws snapping at the rawhide rope, and missing it by an inch.

As he felt the riata tighten upon his fore

legs a sense of what was impending for him swept over the stallion. His agility, his speed, and his strength all came back to him, and with a snort and a squeal of rage and fear he sprang aside and started to break through the line of vaquero swiftly closing in on him to reinforce Eagleheart.

As the end of the lariat was reached Eagleheart was seen to lean backward until he nearly touched the ground. Then the lariat tightened with a snap and Eagleheart met the strain squarely across his hips. His muscles cracked with the strain, but Piebald fared still worse.

For the sudden tug upon his fore legs threw him heavily and he went sprawling upon his side. Before he could rise a sixty-foot lariat had ensnared his hind legs, while another fell over his head, catching him fairly around the neck. He struggled frantically, kicking and striking, biting and squealing, but it was useless. In another

second a Navajo sat upon his head, and he was so entangled with rawhide ropes that he could scarcely move.

He had fought his fight and had lost. Never again would he rise as a free wild horse. Henceforth he would be the slave and the servant of man. Perhaps a willing servant, but nevertheless a slave. The mesa, the canyon, the cedar thicket, and the high mountain would know him no more.

While he still lay helpless a cinche was worked carefully under him and drawn tight about his barrel. This was the first sign of his bondage, and as it tightened about his middle he snarled and gnashed his teeth, and redoubled his efforts to get free, but all of no avail. Those half dozen riatas held him with a remorseless grip.

Then Eagleheart's own mount was brought alongside, and a short lariat was placed about Piebald's neck, and the other end fastened to Eagleheart's saddle horn. This

wonderful vaquero then mounted his broncho, that had been blindfolded in order that he might the better do his master's bidding, and not fear the wild horse.

When everything was ready, at a word from Eagleheart the Indians, with almost the skill of jugglers, let go their lariats, and with the exception of the rope about his neck Piebald was free.

With a wild squeal he scrambled to his feet, and was off up the canyon, dragging Eagleheart's mount with him. But the more he strained and tugged at the lariat the more he tired himself out. It was like a dead weight, something that he could not get rid of. This horse and rider always kept close by his side. They were, in a sense, a part of him.

He turned in rage to take a piece out of the neck of the Indian's mustang, but Eagleheart was watching for just such a move. Like a flash his moccasined foot

shot out, catching Piebald in the side of the neck, just behind the cheek bone. As often as the infuriated stallion turned to bite, that relentless foot caught him in the neck. This was an adversary that he could not fight, as he could not get at him.

Up and down they raced, the Indian sitting his mount gracefully. In his lithe movements there was no indication of the great strain that his muscles and nerves were undergoing. He was silent, grave, and watchful. Whenever Piebald lagged, Eagleheart reached over and lashed him with his quirt. Thus with this relentless draw of a running mate, and the tireless scourge of the quirt, they gradually wore him out, and practically broke his wild, rebellious spirit.

It was not until twilight, and Piebald was so fagged that he could scarcely trot, that Eagleheart let go the short lariat and the training for that day was finished.

Early the next morning they were after him again. He was roped, thrown, and entangled in half a dozen lariats, as before, and when he had been made helpless, in the place of the cinche, a complete saddle went on his back. This was too much and he struggled frantically. It was the first burden that he had ever carried.

Once more Eagleheart took his place by the wild horse's side, mounted upon his trusty broncho, and the vaquero were told to let go.

As on the day before Piebald scrambled to his feet, and was off like the wind, trying to shake off this horrible thing that had been fastened so tightly to him. But it was of no use. There was the drag of the other horse, Eagleheart's moccasined foot to keep him from biting, and the lariat to bind him to this double burden. For hours he raced just as he had done the day before, trying in vain to shake them off, but it was hopeless. The Indian controlled him with a

grip like iron. He was in the hands of the greatest of all the Navajo vaquero.

The saddle was his second day's lesson, but there was more trouble ahead.

The following morning he was again roped and thrown and while he struggled to free himself, that hateful burden was again cinched upon his back. Not only that but while he lay helpless one of the lariats around his neck was passed under his fore leg, and his head was drawn down until it would seem that his neck must snap. Then while he was utterly helpless, so held that he could not stir his head, a bit was thrust between his teeth, and a bridle slipped over his head.

This infuriated him even more than the saddle had done, for it was a more sure sign of his servitude, and one that he instinctively understood. He snarled and gnashed his teeth, and raged inwardly, but was helpless.

When the vaquero let go this morning, Piebald galloped off up the canyon at his best pace, but the Navajo and his mustang were at his side as usual. There was no shaking them off. The lariat about his neck always held and the moccasined foot kept him from biting. All he could do was to vent his fury in wild galloping, and that was just what Eagleheart wanted. The harder he galloped the better he was satisfied.

There remained but one more lesson. His humiliation was nearly complete. But this lesson from the vaquero's standpoint was the most interesting, as it was the most perilous.

The following morning when Piebald was again roped, thrown, saddled and bridled, after violent struggles on his part, Eagleheart climbed carefully into the saddle on the prostrate horse, gathered up the rein, and gave the word to let go. This the

Navajos did with agility, for they knew that something was now due to happen.

Nor were they disappointed. With a single scramble Piebald was on his feet. Almost with the same movement he stood fairly upon his hind legs, standing as nearly erect as a man could have done. Eagleheart clutched his mane, and swung one foot out of the stirrup in readiness to slip off if he should fall over backward; but he came down on all fours and when he struck, the Indian had both feet in the stirrups again.

He now reversed the program, and kicked straight up, and for a moment the Indian lay upon his neck, and it would seem as though he would slide off; but he stuck.

Then Piebald sprang into the air with all fours, hunched his back up nearly double, and came down with all four feet planted together, but his rider still stuck.

Then he sprang into the air with his

STANDING AS NEARLY ERECT AS A MAN

head pointing toward the north, turned a quarter way about and came down to the west. But this was equally futile. All points of the compass he tried, but all were hopeless.

Then he tried the most desperate game of all; he reared and fell upon his side, as though to crush the rider's leg, but when he struck the saddle was empty. He had done the trick at last, and with a wild squeal he was up, but now the saddle again contained the vaquero.

It was useless, so Piebald ceased his bucking and rearing and bolted up the canyon like the wind, Eagleheart lashing him with his quirt, and digging his spurs into his sides as they went. Out of the canyon they raced and over the lava beds, and the Navajos saw them no more until evening.

Just at sunset Eagleheart walked the wild stallion slowly into the canyon, and dis-

mounting gave the bridle into the hands of one of his braves.

"He all right," he said. "Put him with the other. He broke good. There no such other horse as him in Arizona. He is the wind. To-morrow I ride him some more. You ride him. Any one ride him. He all right."

Eagleheart reached up and rubbed the horse's ears at their roots, and passed his hand lightly over the forehead, with a caressing movement that horses like.

Piebald nosed his hand, but did not offer to bite. He seemed as gentle and submissive as any horse in the Navajo band.

He had learned to know and love the hand of Eagleheart which was like iron to bend his will, but like the touch of the wind upon his forehead, a caress, something that he loved and longed for.

The wild horse had found his master, and knew that he was good.

CHAPTER VI

THE RACE AT FORT BLANCO

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Fort Blanco was not really much of a fort, but rather a military post by means of which the United States government dominated that lawless northeastern portion of Arizona, north of Tucson.

Sometimes the post was occupied, but more often it was empty. If the times were lawless and it was necessary it was occupied, but not otherwise.

The chief marauders were several scattered bands of restless Indians, who frequently got too much snake juice and went on the war-path, taking one another's scalps as a matter of course, but frequently varying the program with a white man's scalp. When such outbreaks occurred the soldiers had to go after the Indians and punish

them. The redmen were so well armed with modern firearms that it was too much of an undertaking for the average posse.

When occupied, Fort Blanco was the social centre of that forlorn desert portion of Arizona. The soldiers were all young men and when not on duty usually saw that there was something doing. The chief event of the year however was a horse-race, which was usually held upon the parade grounds in November, after harvesting was well out of the way.

Horse-racing is a common diversion of frontier countries,—not trotting, but running races. There are no fancy trotting horses among these rough and ready frontier equines, but each community can usually boast a running horse upon which the local sports are ready to bet their last dollar.

The horse-race at the fort was always advertised for two or three weeks in advance by means of hand-made posters, the

work of Rembrandt Charlie, which were posted in all the frontier towns for a hundred miles around. In addition to that it received much mouth to mouth advertising, as it was the one thing talked about by vaquero, and all men and boys interested in sport for at least six weeks before the event.

Some of those who intended to be present had to start two or three days in advance, for this is the country of magnificent distances.

It was as motley a crowd as could be gotten together anywhere in Uncle Sam's domains that began pouring into the parade grounds early on the morning of the appointed day. There were Indians of half a dozen tribes,—Shoshones from Nevada, and Cheyennes from New Mexico, Papagos from away down in the Santa Rosa Valley, in southern Arizona, and Navajos from all quarters, for like the others they were wanderers.

Some of the Indian bands brought their families along, and they camped near the parade ground during the gala-day. Such parties were composed of braves and squaws, papooses and dogs, ponies, and burros, and even sheep if they were Navajos, for the Navajos frequently drove their sheep with them, as they were the most valuable thing that they possessed.

It was a striking picture to see an Indian village go by, with its motley array of colors and kinds. The Indian, both man and woman, affects bright colors, and the war bonnets of the chiefs were not brighter than the garish calico skirts of the squaws. But perhaps the oddest thing in the outfit was the little burro who dragged the lodge poles, piled high with blankets, pots, spiders, and all the camp paraphernalia.

If the company was merely a bunch of braves they were usually bright with feathers and paint, for they held it a sign of

nobility to make a fine show. With them fine feathers surely made fine birds.

In addition to the Indians there were sedate Mormons from the southwest corner of Utah, and cow punchers and ranchmen from Nevada, miners and prospectors, not to mention a goodly sprinkling of greasers.

Many were drawn hither by their love of horses and clean sport, but more came with that mad desire to gamble on the race. Next to the drink habit, the worst vice in frontier countries is that of gambling. Miners are proverbial gamblers. Even their mining is a great gamble though they do not put in their time at the gaming table.

Not only the cow punchers and the ranchmen loved to gamble on the races, but the Indians had caught the vice from the whites and had the disease in even a more acute form. They would gamble not only their ponies and dogs, their knives, and

guns, their blankets, but also the clothes upon their backs, and their lodge poles, and the hides that covered them at night.

The squaws were quite as bad as the braves, although they did not have so much property to risk, but they often wagered their calico skirts upon their favorite pony, and went home with an old discarded blanket wrapped about their waists.

So it may readily be seen that it was an animated and motley crowd that assembled each autumn at Fort Blanco for the annual horse-race. When we add to the excitement of the race that of gambling upon it, and the fact that many of the vast crowd that looked on were primed for the occasion with corn whiskey strong as lye, it may well be imagined that something was doing at the post on those occasions.

The Papagos had brought up a queer little Mexican pony from the South. He was called in their language the Jack Rabbit.

He had long ears, like his namesake, and was very small, not over seven hundred pounds, but he was said to be a famous running horse. He was ridden by a small Indian boy, perhaps twelve years old, who was dressed as nearly in nature's garb as possible, for he merely wore a breech cloth.

The Shoshones had brought down a long geared, lithe broncho, called the Panther. Their horse was ridden by Dark Cloud, who was gay in war-paint and feathers, and a gaudy blanket.

The Cheyennes had brought their Desert Hawk, a rather well-bred looking horse that had seen better days, a horse that they had probably borrowed on a dark night of some rancher from New Mexico, and forgotten to return him. He too was a running horse of local repute.

For the Navajos, Eagleheart was to ride his wonderful pinto.

Our old friend, Piebald, was more con-

spicuous for his garish color than for the races he had won, for Eagleheart had rarely run him, preferring to keep him for his own pleasure and as a hunting mount, but this time he had consented, after much persuading by the Navajo braves, to put him in the race.

The soldiers from the post had entered two of their cavalry mounts, which were very well-bred Kentucky running horses, and as two of the soldiers had been jockeys in their better days, they were quite confident of getting all the money.

There are always good running horses among the cowboys, so the Nevada cow punchers had brought down two ponies of local repute, but of no special breed, probably mustangs.

From this description it will be at once conjectured that it was a very fast company of running horses that had come together for the annual race at the post, on this the year of my story.

There was great rivalry between the ponies entered by the Indians, and those entered by the white men. The Indians were ready to do anything that an Indian's horse might win, and the whites the same. So it had been arranged, as jockeys arrange such things, that the Jack Rabbit and Piebald were to be the favorites for the Indians, and the two Kentucky running horses for the soldiers and ranchmen.

The rest of the horses were to do all that they could in the race to help out these favorites, to get in the way of their adversaries, or if possible to run them into a pocket—that is for three horses to get in front of a favorite that is expected to win and hold him back simply by obstructing the course. These and a score of other tricks are usually resorted to by jockeys, such as flicking your adversary's horse with your riding-whip, or anything else to win.

Eagleheart, who was usually very sumptu-

ously dressed in the finest Navajo blankets with gay war bonnet, and beaded moccasins and elaborate belt, had stripped himself almost like the Indian boy who rode the Jack Rabbit. He wore the usual breech cloth, and one bright feather stuck straight out from his scalp-lock. But he had sought to make up for this scant clothing with war-paint. His splendid legs were striped like a barber's pole, while serpents writhed about his waist, and bright birds flopped upon his back. The Indian who had decorated him was certainly an artist from the Indian's standpoint, for Solomon in all his glory was never arrayed like this.

Close up to the track the Indians and whites crowded, to the number of about two thousand, which is a large crowd in a state like Arizona.

It was an animated gathering and excitement was plainly written upon all faces, although the Indians did not show it as much

as the whites, though many of their number had wagered everything that they possessed upon the race. Particularly had the Indians entered into large wagers with the whites, relying upon the Jack Rabbit and Piebald to keep them from harm. Evidences of the wagers were seen upon every side, for ponies, sheep, blankets, rifles and all the trappings dear to the heart of the frontiersman were there, all hanging upon the fleetness of their favorite horse.

The race was twice around the track, two miles, so it was a race of endurance, as well as speed.

When the race was called, all of the riders but Eagleheart rode down the track a score of rods, to make the start. Eagleheart sat silently upon Piebald under the wire, and a little to one side. When the judges asked him if he was not going to race, he said: "Me no care for flying start. When the rest come, me go along." As he was a great

favorite and a standing start was a disadvantage, no one made any objections.

It was a stirring sight as the fine nervy horses came down the track at a keen gallop, neck to neck, as near as they could. The start seemed fair, so the judges cried, "Go," and they were off.

When they were even with Piebald and Eagleheart, the horse seemingly of his own volition, although he probably had a sign from the Indian, sprang into the race. To the wonder of all, Eagleheart drove his mount without bridle or even a rope, which the Indians often use instead of a bridle, but guided him merely by the pressure of the knee on his sides, and by the hand upon his neck.

Piebald's start was most sensational, for it was a great jump so quick and long that had not Eagleheart gripped his belly with his knees, and caught hold of his mane with one hand, he would have been

left in mid-air. Although the Navajo's horse had started on the outside of the track, without a running start, yet in the first twenty rods he executed what would be called in football a brilliant end run ; for, making a great circle, he passed the other seven horses and took the pole before the first furlong had been run. Though they are a silent people, a yell of delight went up from the Indians, but their triumph was of short duration, for Eagleheart and his calico horse soon fell behind and were trailing the very last in the procession when the end of the quarter had been reached. Either the pace was too fast for them or at a sign from his rider Piebald had intentionally dropped behind.

Not fully appreciating the good wind that would be needed for the second mile the soldier jockeys put their Kentucky horses to their best pace so they were well in the lead when the half was reached.

The Jack Rabbit, urged on by the Indian boy rider, was pressing them closely, and every Indian had his eyes riveted upon the queer little horse, who ran like his namesake with great jumps, recovering very quickly, and this combination made him a great runner.

The cow punchers also were putting their bronchos to their best pace, and were pushing the Jack Rabbit hard, while the other three horses, all ridden by Indians, were trailing the calico horse at the tail of the procession. The white man's horses were clearly in the lead so far.

But on the third quarter the Jack Rabbit opened up and showed a burst of speed that astonished even his admirers, who had known all the time that he could run. Not only did he increase his stride, but also his recovery, until he was running like the wind. The Kentucky horses were passed almost as though they were standing still,

and the Jack Rabbit took the pole, while the Papagos howled like fiends.

For the entire third quarter the Jack Rabbit was well to the front holding the pole, but the white jockeys plied their quirts so that at the end of the quarter they finished neck to neck. The pace was clearly too much for the Jack Rabbit, who now fell behind, while the Desert Hawk came alongside, and the Cheyennes took their turn at yelling. The cow punchers too were well to the front, so the white man's horses were still having the best of it.

From this time on to the end of the first mile there was little change, the horses of the soldiers, and the cow punchers and the Desert Hawk all running nearly neck to neck, or so close that there was little difference between them. Thus they thundered under the wire for the first mile, these five horses in a bunch and the other three Indian ponies trailing.

The soldiers, the cow punchers, and ranchers, and the general white population were frantic. They yelled like madmen, and threw their hats in the air, for they thought that the Desert Hawk would soon fall behind as the Jack Rabbit had done on the previous quarter, leaving the four horses of the white men in the lead. All the money would be theirs. The Indians were correspondingly depressed, but they kept their faces stolid and indifferent, and showed their fear as little as possible; besides many of them doubtless knew that the end was not yet, and that he laughs best who laughs last.

With the passing of the first mile a sudden change came over Eagleheart and his pinto. The Indian's whole body was seen to suddenly become wonderfully animated, his muscles to play, his face to become mobile, and his eyes to flash with the light of battle. He was seen to lean forward on

his horse's neck, and to pat and stroke the sleek coat of Piebald, while a corresponding change swept through the calico horse. His muscles suddenly became like steel springs while his hoofs acquired the wings of the wind. Then to the straining ears of the Navajo, above the thunder of the hoofs of the flying horses, above the yells of the cheering partisans, came the chant of the Indian rider to his horse, like a song floating out of the babel.

"Ishtah, my antelope, whose sire was the whirlwind, and whose dam was the lightning, King of the Desert, Chief of the long billowing plains, now let the wind be in thy hoofs, the whirlwind in thy knee joints. Let thy hoofs beat with a noise like thunder.

"The rest are but snails; like the tortoise and the snail let their pace be. Let them stick to the earth like a papoose in the quagmire; let them run as an old man with a stick to lean upon.

"Blow the breath of life from thy nostrils; let it be like the breath of the north wind, strong, and without end.

"The squaw in the wigwam is waiting for warm blankets, that the King of the Desert will bring her. The chief is waiting in his lodge for the coming of the son of the whirlwind. He shall come with the warm blankets, and the guns, the ponies, and the leggins of the white man. The white man is cunning, but the King of the Desert is not slow. His hoofs pass like the morning light. As swift as the coming of night that passes over the mesa, like the wind, they crush not the sage-brush in passing.

"The chief, the squaw, the papoose are calling, all are in thy keeping, Desert King. Be as the eagle, as the antelope, as the passing of morning, and of evening. Be as the coming of death to an old man, swift, and terrible to thine enemies."

Such was the chant of the Indian to his

flying horse that came to the straining ears of the Navajos above the thunder of many hoofs and the yelling of the frantic crowd.

The first quarter of the second mile was almost a repetition of the first quarter of the race, only the race was now half run and excitement was at fever heat. Piebald was on the outside of the track, while the other horses hugged the pole as well as they could. Again the calico horse, in response to Eagleheart's chant, and the caress of the hand that he loved upon his neck, put forth a great burst of speed, showing clearly that he had not yet found his best pace.

He increased his stride, until he ran more like an antelope than a horse, and he recovered so rapidly that the ear could scarcely distinguish the rolling drum beat of his hoofs.

In half a furlong he had passed the Panther, and was pressing the Jack Rabbit

closely. For a few jumps they ran neck to neck, then the smaller horse fell behind, and Eagleheart and his pinto were after the Desert Hawk. Foot by foot, rod by rod, they closed up the distance between them. The Cheyenne rider, seeing that he was being rapidly overhauled, plied his quirt, slapped his horse on the neck with both hands, and poured a flood of Cheyenne lingo into his ear, but all in vain. His Desert Hawk might be the wind, but the horse behind him was the whirlwind. It was of no avail. They ended the first quarter of the second mile neck to neck, and close to the bunch of four horses ridden by the white men.

Jump by jump Piebald drew away from the Desert Hawk. First he was half a length ahead, and then a full length, and then two lengths ahead; before they had run the first furlong of the second quarter he was close upon the white men's horses,

Rod by Rod He Drew Away from His Competitors

but here the jockeying of the white man came into play. One of the horses forged ahead his length, and Piebald pressed into the gap behind him, while the two horses on either side closed up against him, and the pinto was in a pocket.

It was an old trick in the East, but not often seen in the Western running races. The three horses forming the pocket would hold Piebald where he was and keep him back, while the fourth horse ridden by one of the soldier jockeys would be forced forward to win the race.

Too late Eagleheart saw the trap and his mistake. They had tricked him, and might win the race, but the Indian was good stuff and the look of determination upon his grim, paint-bestreaked countenance grew more stern, as he looked first this way and then that for some way out of his difficulty. Whatever he did must be done quickly, for they were thundering down

the track like a whirlwind; there would not be over thirty seconds more before they went under the wire.

Just as they finished the second quarter of the second mile a very slight opening appeared between the horse ridden by the soldier jockey and one of the cow punchers' bronchos. It was a mere glimmer of light ahead—just wide enough so Piebald could get his nose between their flanks. This opening however was enough for Eagleheart. Twice across the side he lashed Piebald with all his might, at the same time calling upon his desert steed with a clarion yell.

The effect was magical. To Piebald it was the call to battle.

His old wild horse days came back to him in a flash. Again he was the fighting stallion, the King of the wild horse band, fighting for his honor and his life. His lips bared showing his white gleaming teeth, and he nipped a good piece from the

rump of the soldier's horse. In two more jumps he struck the cow puncher's horse upon his hind leg just above the hock, laming him badly, and then like a whirlwind he passed between them while a demoniacal yell went up from a thousand red throats. He had broken through the pocket and was after the soldier jockey and his Kentucky thoroughbred.

One of the cow punchers in the crowd who had been up to 'Frisco to see a big football game sized up the act of the pinto to the perfect satisfaction of all who heard him.

"Gee whiz," he drawled. "Ef that air bronk ain't a splinter of greased lighting. Why, ef he could get a try out in that air football skrimidge up at 'Frisco, why, he would be the gol durndest line smasher in the whole bunch."

On thundered the Kentucky horse and on came the pinto overhauling him rapidly.

The soldier jockey urged his horse to the limit for he was now their only hope, but it was useless. He was a great running horse, but no match for the pinto. Wind was Piebald's strong point. He had been bred and reared in hardship, made to run for his life while a mere colt by the old King, and running for one's life is good practice. It is a training that will acquire speed if anything will.

When half down the first furlong of the quarter he passed the Kentucky horse, and did not see him again.

Rod by rod he drew away from this, even the fleetest of his competitors, until at the end of the quarter he was a hundred feet ahead.

Now upon the last quarter the pinto showed his desert training and what kind of stuff a wild horse is made of; what wind he had and what endurance, and what speed.

Now for the first time Eagleheart really put him to his utmost speed. If he had been the whirlwind before he now became a cyclone. A thundering, quivering half ton of horse-flesh, running for the man he loved—for his master, and for the red man's race.

Rod by rod he increased his lead upon even the Kentucky horse.

There was a method in Eagleheart's madness to increase his lead which was perfectly safe, which the white jockeys did not at first understand. One hundred yards back from the wire a flag had been planted.

This was the distance flag. If any horse failed to reach this flag by the time the winning horse passed under the wire, he was distanced and thrown out of the race. It was Eagleheart's plan, in revenge for the pocket, in which they had nearly caught him, to distance the entire field, and so take all three prizes himself.

Too late the soldier rider of the Kentucky horse saw the stratagem and lashed his horse furiously to head it off.

But it was not to be, for Piebald thundered under the wire just one jump before the soldier's horse came up to the distance flag, and he had won the race. Not only had he won the race, but he had distanced the entire field, and won all the money, an unheard-of thing in the annals of running horses.

Eagleheart's feet had barely touched the ground as he sprang lightly from the victorious horse, when a tall, soldierly looking young man hurried out of the throng toward him.

It was the colonel, the commander of the post. He was not really a colonel, but a captain, but he was so fond of horses and rode so much that the soldiers had dubbed him the colonel.

He was lean and muscular like an Indian,

and the desert wind and sun had so tanned his skin that he might almost have passed for an Indian.

Straight up to the Indian he walked and laid his hand caressingly on Piebald's mane.

"He is a fine horse," he said. "I have never seen his equal as a running horse. Will you sell him?"

"Me sell him?" asked Eagleheart as though he thought his ears had played him false.

"Yes," repeated the colonel. "Will you sell him?"

Eagleheart passed his hand lightly over Piebald's nose and noted his wide nostrils where the skin was so transparent that he could mark the course of the blood-vessels, then down his neck, over the satin coat. Then his keen, hawk-like eyes passed over the horse's clean-cut limb. Then he looked again into the eager face of the colonel.

"I sell him?" he repeated once more as though to gain time.

To him this horse was priceless. He had loved him the moment he set eyes upon him five years before in Silver King Canyon, and now the colonel wanted to buy him.

His love for this horse was as his love for his tribe, or his squaws, his love of the mountains and the plains, and his love of the Manito. The horse was his passion, and his religion.

But the colonel was a great man, and as such deserved consideration. Eagleheart was courteous. A certain deference had been born in his bones. He could not refuse a stranger hospitality, or a friend the granting of a request when it did not threaten his all.

He looked at the distant mountains across the scorching plains, and wished with all his heart that he and Piebald were

there, far from this eager, covetous, bargaining white crowd.

Then a bright idea came to him. He would offer the Piebald horse to the colonel, but would put such a price upon him that he would not even consider buying him, so he made answer :

" Yes, I sell him."

" What do you ask ? " was the colonel's next question.

The Indian looked shrewdly at the soldier, and a fear crept into his heart; perhaps the colonel loved Piebald even as he did; he might be willing to give big money. Well, he would make the money big, so he answered :

" I sell him. You give me ten good Indian pony, one hundred Navajo sheep, five rifle, five revolver, much blanket, much tobacco, and he be your broncho."

" I will take him," replied the colonel

quickly as though he feared the Indian might repent and back out.

The soldier then went into the fort and came out with a big bag of gold. He then went among the Indians, and purchased, after some bargaining, ten ponies, and one hundred sheep. He brought from the fort the rifles, revolvers, blankets, and tobacco, and placed them before Eagleheart.

He also brought out a bridle and saddle, and placed the latter upon Piebald's back. Eagleheart then slowly put the bridle upon his horse, which would be his no more, and placed the bridle rein in the colonel's hand.

"He is yours, Seignor," he said. "I go."

Half an hour later Eagleheart with half a dozen of his vaquero might have been seen driving his Indian ponies, and the one hundred sheep forth to the distant mesa where the Navajos were located for that month.

There was great excitement among Eagle-

heart's braves, for they now looked upon him as the richest of all his tribesmen, and his possessions did make quite a brave show, while his blankets and rifles were all one pony could pack, but to Eagleheart it was different.

His head was bowed. His chin rested upon his breast, and his eye, that had flashed with such fire during the race, was filled with sadness. He saw not the plains and the sage-brush, the cacti and the mesquite. He saw not the intervening mesa with its juniper and cedar, nor the distant purple mountains. He saw only the form of Piebald, with another man's saddle on his back, and another man's hand upon his bridle rein. In Eagleheart's own mind, he was the very poorest of all the Navajos, for he had sold that which he valued the most highly of anything in the world,—his wonderful desert horse, the horse in whose hoofs was the speed of the wind, whose

eyes were two morning stars, and whose coat was like beaver skin. He had betrayed him into the hands of a white man, and a great cloud lay across his sun, and all the world was darkened.

CHAPTER VII

THE COLONEL'S CALICO HORSE

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THE relations of Piebald to his new master were friendly from the first. The colonel was a great horseman, not the equal of Eagleheart in his particular field, that of vaquero, but still he was a great horseman. He did not ride with the grace and subtlety of the Indian ; his riding and horsemanship were more of the cavalryman order.

He could sit in the saddle from sunrise till sunset with very little fatigue, and he always accommodated himself to his steed, so he was an easy rider for a horse to carry. Piebald was quick to appreciate this, as his work under his new master was often arduous.

But his life as a soldier's mount was quite different from that of a hunting and riding horse, for which purposes Eagleheart had kept him. He now had to learn many things, which were quite strange to him.

But he combined in a remarkable degree the cunning of the wild horse and the acquired intelligence of the domestic steed, so he was one of the brightest horses to teach that the colonel had ever broken to cavalry duty.

He was for giving him a high-flown name but the post laughed the idea to scorn, and dubbed him at once the colonel's Calico Horse, so he was always known during his military career as the Calico Horse, or Cal for short.

The very day that he bought him the colonel began teaching him the cavalry maneuvers, and he kept at it so persistently that in two weeks he knew most of them as well as any horse in the troop. He would

Lying Close Upon His Horse's Neck

go up and down in single file, by twos or fours, and do all the other maneuvers with great dexterity and precision.

Eagleheart had broken him so he could shoot from the saddle and he was not gun shy; but the persistent popping of fire-arms that he heard on the parade grounds, both during drill and target practice, at first made him a little nervous. This soon wore off.

Finally he would lie down at a sign from his master and allow the cavalry carbine to be rested across the saddle, and not even move a muscle when the rifle belched forth its deadly missile.

But the feats in which Piebald and the colonel most excelled were those of riding at a breakneck pace across the parade grounds, and picking up supposedly wounded men, who lay upon the ground for that purpose. The colonel had muscles like whipcords, and his arms were long and

subtle, while his calico horse seemed to understand the game as well as he did. They would come tearing across the field at a brisk gallop, the calico horse going so close to the supposedly wounded man that it would seem as though he would trample his brains out; but he never stepped upon a man. At just the right moment the long arm of the colonel would reach down, and catching the wounded soldier by the collar with seeming ease he would swing him up and across the pommel of his saddle, while the calico horse did not so much as slacken his gallop.

About two miles from the parade grounds was a precipitous mountain, if one may call a hillock three or four hundred feet high a mountain. It was formed of rocks piled up so evenly that it would almost seem to be the work of man. Of course there was a filling of soil between, but the rocks were so much in evidence that it seemed a moun-

tain of stone at a little distance. It had long been a dream of the cavalrymen at the fort to ride a horse up the steep ascent, which was called Horseman's Folly, from the tumbles that foolish cavalrymen had sustained in trying to make it.

The colonel had not owned the calico horse a month, when the troopers began to josh him about trying the hazardous feat. Now if there was one thing that the colonel could not stand for, it was teasing. He was quick tempered, and also of that fiery disposition that never takes a dare. So he coolly informed the men that he could ride Cal up the ascent with ease. In fact it would be nothing for a horse like him. At this statement the troopers grinned so broadly that the colonel was still further incensed.

The outcome of the whole matter was that the following Saturday afternoon was appointed for the feat, and a general invita-

tion was sent out to the near-by ranchmen to come in and see the event.

Some of the colonel's more intimate friends among the troopers sought to dissuade him, but the matter had gone too far. The colonel was not a man to back out, although he probably knew that he risked both his own and the horse's life in the attempt.

It was just the daredevil feat to suit the reckless community, so the audience was large, for horsemanship was the first accomplishment in this horseback-riding country. There were all sorts of wagers on the undertaking. None were willing to give even money that the horse and rider would accomplish the feat, but many were willing to wager even money that both horse and rider would be killed.

As the colonel rode through the crowd to the foot of Horseman's Folly words of encouragement greeted him on all sides, and as he looked up at the dark, frowning

ascent he realized that his willingness to take a dare had again gotten him into a very serious position. His cheek showed pale even through the bronze of the desert sun and wind, but he did not flinch.

Picking out the easiest-looking portion of the mountain where there was a sort of pathway, the work of the spring arroyo, he walked the calico horse back a hundred feet to get a good start, and sent him at the perilous path at a keen gallop.

At first Piebald did not seem to understand what was wanted of him and sought to turn this way and that to avoid the steep ascent, but the colonel pulled sharply on the rein, and drove the spurs deep in his flank, and he understood. There were no more feints. Up the ascent he started, jumping from point to point like a goat. Sometimes his footing was so precarious that he made three or four strokes with his feet before he could gain a foothold.

Showers of small stones and loads of gravel were dislodged and came sliding down. The crowd below watched with wide-open mouths and bated breath. This was something that they had never seen done by a mere horse before. It was more like the feat of a big-horn sheep. Up, up they scrambled higher and higher, the crowd becoming more fearful each moment, until perhaps two hundred feet was reached, then what might have been expected happened. A portion steeper than the rest of the slope had been reached and here the frantic efforts of the struggling horse to get a foothold loosened several large stones. These started others and before the watching crowd below or the horseman above knew what was about to happen, a landslide of considerable proportions had started rapidly down the mountain, horse and rider struggling frantically to keep their position on top.

It was all over almost before any of the thousand watching spectators really knew what was about to happen. There was a roar of falling stones and sand, a cloud of dust that nearly hid Piebald and the colonel from their friends. They were dimly seen struggling to keep their position at the top of the landslide, then the cloud enveloped them and tons and tons of soil and rock rushed down upon the crowd so quickly that some who had crowded close to the foot of the mountain had to scramble back to keep from being covered themselves.

As soon as they could collect their senses, the soldiers rushed to the assistance of the colonel and his unfortunate steed. Piebald's head just showed above the mountain of sand and stones while the colonel's military hat floated upon the débris.

They had scarcely picked up the hat when the dirt beneath began wriggling violently and the colonel, not much the

worse for the plunge, scrambled out. He was nearly suffocated by the dust and his smart uniform was covered with dirt, but his pride had suffered even worse than his person, and in that sensitive place he was sorely wounded.

The calico horse with his usual high spirits freed himself even before the shovels which the soldiers had brought could be put in play, and horse and rider stood in the open again, but so covered with dust and sand as to be hardly recognized. Willing hands soon removed as much of the dirt as possible without a bath. The colonel then mounted Cal and started to ride back to the fort.

There was a profound silence among the spectators. All wanted to laugh and most were holding in with difficulty, but all feared the colonel's wrath if they showed their mirth.

When horse and rider reached the further

end of the hill, the colonel turned his mount to see how much of a hole had been made in the side of the mountain by the landslide. As he sat there looking gloomily up at the new scar in the mountain's side, the reins lying loosely, to his great surprise his intrepid horse began slowly of his own accord to ascend the steep hillside. The colonel's astonishment was too great for anything but a cuss word, but wishing to see what the horse was going to do, he let him have his head.

Cal did not try to ascend directly against the grade as the colonel had driven him a few minutes before, but went up slowly and obliquely, thus reducing the grade by more than one-half. Carefully foot by foot he crept along, picking his footing with care, but all the time getting higher and higher, although he was ascending across the face of the hill at an angle of forty-five degrees.

The crowd below watched them with wide open mouths, and not knowing that the horse was doing this of his own free will, their astonishment at the daredevil character of the rider was increased tenfold. He would surely be killed this time. He was a fool after all. They had always known he was.

But nothing terrible seemed imminent, although they were watching with wide open eyes, and bated breath. Foot by foot Cal climbed until the spot where the landslide had started before was reached. Here he paused as though uncertain, and fearful, but finally selected some rather precarious footing just above where the landslide had started and slowly began the ascent again. Up, up they went foot by foot until the top was reached in safety; although it was at the extreme opposite end of the mountain. They had traveled clear across the face of the hill in making the ascent, but the feat.

that had been considered impossible, had been accomplished.

Western audiences are nothing if not demonstrative, and the yell that went up was terrific. Sombreros came off and everything that could be waved was waved in greeting to the man and horse at the top of the mountain.

The colonel, who made a striking picture upon his calico horse, both strongly silhouetted against the deep blue sky, took off his military hat and waved it in answer to their greeting, and a broad grin overspread his sunburned countenance. It was the proudest moment of his life; but the credit really should be all Cal's. So he stroked the wonderful horse's neck and told him in horse language, which the colonel understood perfectly, that he was the greatest old bronc in the world.

Then, before the crowd had gotten fully over their astonishment, Piebald was

headed down the terrible descent. The return seemed to be even harder than going up and the mountain climbing steed used even more care. He seemed to understand the danger even better than his master, and to know where to step and where not to, so the colonel did not try to guide him but gave him his head, just as he had done in the ascent.

About twelve minutes were consumed in the descent, but at last, when the watchers were all black in the face from holding their breath, the foot was reached.

The post had certainly had a thrill, and the cow punchers had seen something that was worth riding a hundred miles to behold. The colonel and Cal were the heroes of the hour. The colonel was toasted and congratulated, and his wonderful horse extolled until nothing more could be desired.

About three weeks after the colonel's exploit of riding up Horseman's Folly, Eagle-

heart came silently into the post. He looked dejected and out of sorts, although it was a part of his stoical Indian character not to show his feelings.

When the soldiers told him of the colonel's feat, a contemptuous smile curled his lips. "That nothing," he said disdainfully. "Piebald he climb up that mountain heself. The colonel no drive him. He big fool. He drive him up like he was a steam engine. He tumble down. Might have broken neck. He go himself, he go careful. I ride him over the Rocky Mountains. He not a horse when you ride over the mountain but a mountain sheep. He almost walk up the wall like a fly. He good horse when no big fool drive him, but with white man to drive him I run further from sunrise to sunset than he. Indian kill good horse running."

This announcement by Eagleheart was greeted by the soldiers with a shout of de-

rision. The idea that a man could outrun a horse was too much for their belief.

A few minutes later when the colonel appeared they told him of Eagleheart's boast.

"You think you can run further than I can ride him in a day, do you?" was the colonel's mirthful question.

"I have spoken," replied Eagleheart curtly. "I always good as my word."

"Well, we will start to-morrow at sunup," said the colonel. "Our race shall be to Fresno near the Nevada line, by any route we may choose. It is forty-five miles as the crow flies. To Fresno and return, and the first one in, wins five Indian ponies."

"My white brother has spoken like a man," returned Eagleheart. "It shall be as he says."

Accordingly, the following morning at sunup the colonel, mounted upon Piebald, rode out of the parade grounds at a keen

gallop to the northward, starting on the first leg of the long race.

Eagleheart sat upon the ground smoking and watched him go. He seemed in no hurry for the start.

"That is a rather brisk pace for you to follow, chief," remarked one of the soldiers.

"Yes, he go too fast," replied the Indian. "He gallop and gallop and then pretty soon he walk and walk; by noon the horse he all tire out. An Indian know better. He just make him trot like de fox. Not fast but steady. Trot, trot, trot. He go that way all day long, all night long. One hundred, two hundred miles, and more. But colonel he not know. He is a white man."

A few minutes later Eagleheart knocked the ashes from his pipe, tightened his belt, and with no luggage but a canteen loped after the colonel, going at what seemed to the soldiers a very leisurely pace.

By noon the colonel had reached Fresno, having covered the first forty-five miles of the race in eight hours of hard riding. He was rather stiff and Piebald was badly blown, for as Eagleheart had predicted he had galloped a good part of the way. He rested an hour and then started back. Five miles out of the town he met Eagleheart loping along in his peculiar Indian manner.

The Indian merely said, "How," and jogged on, but not until he had noted the lather upon Piebald's sides, and the foam upon his nostrils.

They did not see each other again until about half an hour before sunset when they were perhaps five miles from the end of their journey. Then to the great astonishment of the colonel, Eagleheart came loping alongside.

"Got your password from the sheriff?" he asked incredulously.

"I got him," replied the Indian holding

out a slip of paper for the colonel's inspection. Upon it was written, "This is to certify that Eagleheart has called on me in Fresno. He stopped only long enough for me to write this note, while he filled his canteen. Said he was in a hurry. Signed, The Sheriff."

The colonel handed it back to him with more deference than he had ever felt for an Indian before.

"Well, you have made a good run," he said, "but I guess that I can gallop into the post now quicker than you can run, but I wouldn't have believed that you could have made the run until I saw it done with my own eyes."

"There no hurry," said Eagleheart, "we go long together." To this the colonel readily agreed, knowing that he could clap spurs to this wonderful horse of his and dash in ahead when they neared the post.

So talking and jesting about the wager

they finished the rest of the distance together until they were within about a hundred yards of the entrance to the parade grounds. Here the entire post had assembled to witness the finish of this remarkable race.

Seeing the soldiers waiting for them the colonel waved his hat to them and put spurs to his good horse. At the same time a word of Navajo was expelled from Eagleheart's lips so sharp and commanding that it was almost like the crack of a rifle.

At the sound Piebald stopped so quickly that the colonel who was riding carelessly nearly went over his head. It was the Navajo word for whoa, or stand.

At the same moment that the colonel's flight was suddenly checked by this command from the Indian to his horse, Eagleheart opened up a burst of speed that fairly made the soldiers open their mouths with astonishment. There were two or three

men among them who thought they could sprint, but they never mentioned the fact after seeing Eagleheart run. Frantically the colonel plied his spurs, and lashed the broncho with his quirt, but it was useless. He stood like the rock of Gibraltar. In ten seconds' time it was all over, for Eagleheart had shot through the gateway of the parade grounds, and the colonel had lost the wager.

Then he turned and whistled to Piebald, a clear, high-keyed call note. The call that he had always used when they were companions together on the mesa and in the mountains. At the call the pinto broke into a glad gallop and was soon inside the gate.

The colonel was furious, but could do nothing. Eagleheart's eye, too, had a dangerous fire as he noted the welts on the side of the horse where the colonel's quirt had fallen. But knowing that the horse now belonged to the soldier he said nothing.

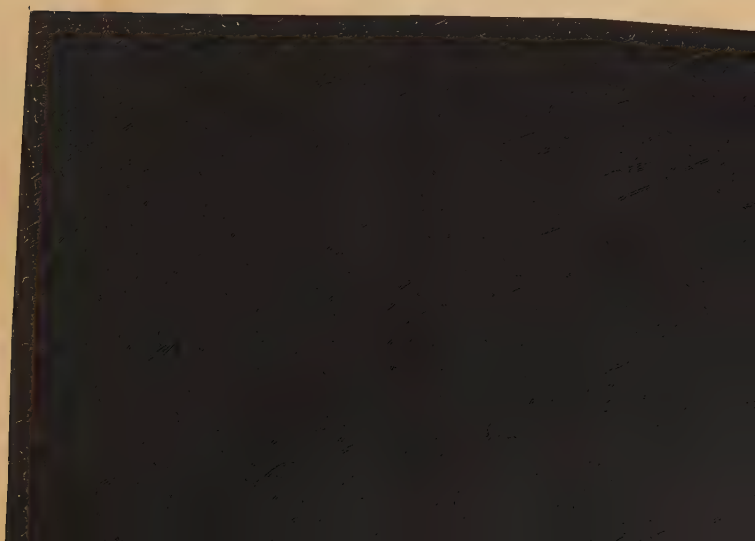
The following day when he left the post he sought out the colonel and offered him all the ponies and other goods that he had originally paid for the calico horse, and in addition agreed to throw in the five horses that he had won the day before, but the colonel shook his head. He would not sell him at any price.

So Eagleheart went sorrowfully away feeling that the cause for which he had run the race, namely, the recovering of his wonderful horse, was as far from accomplishment as ever.

The colonel was quite sore, however, to think how he had been worsted by an Indian, and he did not fully forgive Piebald until after he took his hazardous ride to the international boundary upon perilous business. Here Piebald so surely saved his life that he again possessed his whole affection.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE TRAIL OF THE PAPAGOS



CHAPTER VIII

ON THE TRAIL OF THE PAPAGOS

About a month after his race with Eagle-heart the colonel received word from the south that a small band of Papago Indians, who could usually be found somewhere near the international boundary, as that was a convenient position from which to escape from one country to the other as necessity arose, had gone upon the war-path to the extent of killing a white man who had been traveling peacefully through the Santa Rosa valley. A sorrowful little burro that the man rode had escaped to tell the story.

The Papagos, although they are a rather tough lot individually, were supposed to be at peace with the whites. On this occasion

they had been celebrating the festival of the ripe corn. In their case the celebration took the form of making a very rank variety of whiskey from the ripe grain, then getting drunk. This murder was committed merely in sheer excess of spirits.

The colonel at once set off with three of his troopers to punish them. The party was rather a small one for so stern a task, but a part of the post were off on leave of absence, and these men were all that could be spared. Besides one of these efficient white men was a match for half a dozen Indians unless they were ambushed.

Two days of hard riding brought them to Tucson. Here they stopped for a night to rest their horses and to get further particulars as to the Indians. Then they struck out for the southern arboreal desert to the south of that city.

All semblance of civilization was soon left behind, and they entered that forbid-

ding No Man's Land, the desert. This desert, however, is much less forbidding than the sage-brush deserts of Colorado and Nevada, or even California, for its flora is quite varied and very interesting in many ways.

They found the Santa Rosa valley to be merely a great flood basin, and not a valley at all as we usually understand the term. It was perhaps sixty or seventy miles long and forty or fifty wide, and hemmed in by a perimeter of low-lying but very steep granite mountains. What water this desert saw during the year came into it in the spring during the heavy rains, when the sides of the mountains were furrowed with small arroyo, all leading down to the basin between the mountains. But running water there was none. There were two or three wells, or water-holes, in all but the very driest seasons, but one had to know just where to find them, and to plan his

stops so as to arrive at a new supply of water as soon as the canteens ran low.

The arboreal desert of the Southwest is so thickly planted with mesquit and palo verde, that it looks more like an orchard of small fruit than a desert, only the space between these strange trees is all sand,—sand that reflects the terrible, almost tropical sunlight, flashing the tense rays back into your face, with increasing heat. It seems to be a wise provision of nature to plant one of these shrubs every square rod or so as a sort of anchor, to prevent sand-storms, and thus keep the sands from blowing in great gusts with every passing breeze.

Aside from the mesquit and the palo verde there are half a dozen varieties of cacti,—the ordinary cactus, a few feet in height, and at the other end of the scale the giant cactus sometimes reaching a height of fifty feet. Then there is the barrel cactus, Bigelow's cactus, and the strange Organ

Pipe, containing a large number of branching arms like the pipes of an organ.

Nor, as the colonel's party saw it, was the desert wholly free from animal and bird life. Lank jack-rabbits leaped from mesquit to greasewood. Magpies scolded in the green palo verde, while the red-tailed desert hawk hovered overhead in the dense blue tropical sky. The horned toad and the rattlesnake basked in the scorching sun, while the coyote made mournful music each night when the colonel's party had picketed their horses and rolled themselves into their blankets to sleep. For, although the days were very hot, yet the nights were quite cold by comparison, cold enough even for frost.

At the southern end of the desert, where the trail led between the approaching mountains, they found two distinct trails, one leading to the southwest, and the other immediately south. They could not scout both

at once, and as time was pressing and the scent was getting cold, they agreed to break up, the three troopers going to the south and the colonel alone to the southwest.

The troopers argued that one of their number should go with the colonel, but the officer would not hear of it, saying that he could do as much shooting if they came to close quarters with Indians as the three troopers, and as there was some truth in this statement they finally agreed. Besides the colonel did not think he would find the Indians upon the trail that he was following, as there were no signs of their having passed that way.

About noon, however, he came upon fresh unmistakable Indian signs. These he followed with great care through a defile between the mountains that again shut him in. Presently he came into a small desert tract perhaps half a mile in extent. It was entirely devoid of even mesquit or palo

verde, and the sun's glare upon the unprotected sands was scorching. He rode across the intervening space to the further side, thinking to find an outlet between the hills, but discovered to his disgust that he was in a pocket. He turned to ride back the way that he had come only to find the entrance barred by half a dozen armed Papagos, whose hostile attitude told only too well that they knew for what he had come into this desert land.

The colonel halted his horse, uncertain what to do, and while he was still wondering just how belligerent they were, his doubts were set at rest, for they began firing.

Soon the bullets were kicking up small clouds of sand all about him, showing that they had his range. It was a precarious minute for the colonel. He had been in tough places before, but never in one that promised more than this. He was caught like a rat in a trap. The mountains all

about him were too steep to climb, even with a goat like Piebald. To stay where he was was certain death, for in another minute they would surely get him. Already several shots had come dangerously near.

In a moment the colonel had made up his mind. With him to decide was to act, so the next second he put spurs to Piebald and rode straight at the opening, where the six Indians were popping away at him.

There was perhaps one chance in a dozen that he might get through alive, but that was his only hope.

The colonel had been with the Rough Riders at San Juan Hill, and had been in the thick of many a small battle in the Philippines, but never had his life looked worth as little to him as it did while he galloped down upon these Papagos.

There were two things, however, that he relied on. First, he had a Colts' revolver in either hand, and there was no other man in

Arizona who could use that weapon as the colonel could; and, secondly, he was mounted upon the fleetest horse in the Southwest.

It is one thing to hit a horseman who is standing still and it is quite another to hit him when the horse is running thirty-five or thirty-eight miles an hour, making sixteen and eighteen feet at a jump.

Piebald, wonderful horse that he was, seemed to sense the danger, and he ran like an antelope.

The colonel did not care so much about killing any of the Indians as he did to keep them from killing him, so he began firing when sixty or seventy yards away, in order to drive the red devils to cover and spoil their aim. As he rushed down upon them like a whirlwind, the firing assumed the proportions of a lively skirmish.

When about fifty feet away all of the Indians fired, and the colonel emptied four

chambers of each of his Colts in rapid succession. He was lying close upon his horse's neck, a smoking revolver in either hand.

Piebald seemed to sense just what was expected of him and needed neither spur nor quirt. There was a cloud of dust, a thunder of hoofs and they had passed the entrance, although the bullets rained all about them. One bullet had passed through the colonel's coat, while another had ripped a long rent in the pommel of the saddle.

Piebald had fared even worse, for a bullet had clipped the top of one ear, making it bleed freely. But they were not yet out of danger, for the Papagos still continued to fire and the bullets still hummed about them; but each moment lessened the danger.

Just as the colonel had thought they were out of range and was turning to look back, a peculiar nausea came over him,

and his eyesight went dim. At first he thought it was a partial sunstroke; but soon he discovered blood trickling down his forehead, and knew that he had been struck in the head. He put his hand up and discovered that he had received a bad scalp wound from which he was bleeding freely. The bullet had struck his skull with force enough to partially paralyze certain nerves controlling eyesight and this had caused him the loss of part of his vision.

Whether the loss of eyesight was temporary or permanent seemed all the same to the colonel, for he was a hundred miles from any help, and a band of infuriated Indians were only a few hundred yards behind him. He could not see which way his horse was traveling or even to guide him along the trail. They might about as well have killed him outright, as to have winged him in this way.

The fusillade behind had ceased for the present at least, and that was a bit encouraging. The colonel did not know how well he had shot, and that two of the Indians were lying at the entrance of the defile in the mountains dead, while another was badly wounded. The other three were so badly scared that they had no thought of following such a madman, but the colonel could not know this, so he hung feebly in the saddle sick and faint from loss of blood and from the shock, letting the bridle line hang loosely, leaving Piebald to go where he would.

The only attention he gave to his horse was to occasionally jog him with the spur to impress upon him the fact that they were going somewhere and were in a hurry.

It was a relief to the colonel to see that Piebald seemed to keep going in the same direction, showing that he had made up his mind to go somewhere. The colonel also

noted that the sun shone continually upon his left cheek. They were traveling northward. That was encouraging too. Piebald was a wonderful horse and might pick up the trail and follow it back to civilization. Stranger things had happened.

So the man of iron clung desperately to his saddle, while the sun beat down upon him with scorching rays, and hoped against hope that he might live to reach friends.

It was a strange and terrible situation for the colonel, usually so self-reliant and sure of himself and the country through which he traveled. Normally he had the sight of a hawk, but now he could merely see dimly a few feet in each direction. It was as though a dense fog had encompassed the world, leaving only a meagre circle of half day and half night. When the gloom became for a moment more pronounced he knew that they had passed beneath a tall mesquit. Palo verde and mesquit were but

darker shadows among the night of gloom about him.

The sun seemed to put forth its utmost tropical strength, and to fairly scorch and blister him, while he could feel the fever gradually mounting in his veins. His mouth became parched and his tongue was like a stick. Vainly he tried to moisten it with saliva, but there was no moisture in his mouth.

If they were following the trail northward he knew not, but he felt sure now after a couple of hours that the Papagos were not following him.

How monotonous it was; this changeless gloom full of unknown danger, that he was so powerless to meet. It keyed his nerves to the breaking point. Hearing now would be his only warning of danger, so he strained his ears until the drums fairly ached.

Hour after hour dragged tortuously by,

filled only with the monotonous creak, a creak, creak of saddle leather, the thud, a thud, thud of his horse's hoofs in the sand, and the jingling of his sabre.

Occasionally these sounds were varied by some external noise that set the colonel's heart to pounding with apprehension. Fear he had never known before, even when there was great danger, but now he felt so weak and so defenseless. Perhaps the sound that he had heard was only the scurrying of a jack-rabbit across the trail, or the scolding of some magpies, but it was enough to throw him into a panic.

Finally the sound of his horse's hoofs and the creaking of the saddle and the jingling of his sabre resolved itself into a sort of song with that monotonous refrain, creak, a creak, creak, thud, a thud, thud, interspersed with a jangle, jangle, jangle from the sabre.

Now fits of dizziness often seized him

and he had all he could do to keep his saddle. Then he would feel his head grow light, and his whole body seemed to be floating along in the saddle. He would not even have known that he was riding had it not been for the song of the saddle and the rider.

Finally the sun went down and the heat was a little less oppressive, but his fever was now burning him up, so he did not feel much cooler for the coming of night. Then the moon and the stars appeared, although he did not see them, but he did hear the coyotes as they began their hideous, mournful night chorus.

Thus the intolerable hours wore on, creak, a creak, creak, thud, a thud, thud, and jangle, jangle from the sabre.

About midnight the hostler of the principal hotel in Tucson was aroused by hearing a horse trot into the courtyard that surrounded the stable. He hurried

out to see who the late comer might be, and saw a tall figure on a piebald horse.

"Good-evening, seignor," said the Mexican hostler, but the tall figure made no reply. Instead it lurched to the other side of the horse and fell heavily.

The Mexican ran to the further side of the horse and by the light of his lantern saw that it was the colonel who had put up at the hotel two days before, he who had been in pursuit of the Papagos.

He was covered with blood and pale with that ashen pallor of death.

The hostler felt for his pulse but there was none. He must have died when he fell, for all life had apparently left him.

CHAPTER IX

LOST IN THE DESERT

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THE colonel did not die. Men of his calibre die hard, and, unless they are hit in a very vulnerable spot, struggle back to life from seeming impossible wounds. So the colonel, whose sinews were like those of the oak toughened by many years of exposure, crawled out of bed in three or four days, and after two weeks of inaction was ready for duty again.

It was while convalescing at Tucson that he received word of an important matter in New England, his boyhood home, that made it necessary for him to ask for a short furlough and return home.

He was now on the way back to Fort Blanco, where he had to put things in

shape for his leave of absence. Three days of leisurely riding brought him to the post, and here he spent a day in getting ready for his long journey. Then he set out on Cal for a ride to the northward, that should carry him over the Colorado River, and through one of the largest deserts in the Southwest. This ride was really to straighten up other military matters for the government, before he should start east. Cal, "dear old bronc," he had planned to leave at the railroad junction in the hands of a Mexican until his return.

Two days after leaving Fort Blanco they crossed the Colorado, and struck into the great, silent sage-brush, and greasewood desert, lying in a broad sweep of the Colorado, and called by the Indians, *La palma de la manus de Deo*, "the Palm of God's Hand." Well the poetic yet awful name fitted the forbidding waste,—the silence,

the vastness, and the solemnity of which all suggested the Deity.

On two sides this desert was partly surrounded by mountains, which served as a landmark as long as one kept them in sight; along a portion of the third side ran the Colorado, while the rest was surrounded by mesas almost as inhospitable as the desert itself.

But the colonel was an old hand in this No Man's Land, and as it was a forbidding country that could daunt his nerve, he struck into the desert with all of his usual assurance. He had been over the trail once before with a greaser, and did not doubt his ability to find his way. Besides he would be out of sight of the mountains but a few hours at the most.

He filled his two canteens and a water bag for Cal at the last water-hole at the edge of the desert, and thus well equipped headed the broncho into the desolate waste.

This desert was not much like the wonderful arboreal desert of southern Arizona, although that was bad enough. Here there was no bright green to rest the eye. Here the green of sage-brush and greasewood had been faded out, by the scorching sun and lack of moisture, to a sickly gray-green or lemon-yellow. The cacti were much smaller than in the southern desert, and there were only two or three varieties.

Piles of lava-like rock, which seemed to the colonel like funeral piles, were everywhere. They were interspersed with sand-dunes, and small drifts of sand, that eddied and curled with the passing of the slightest breeze. Horned toads and rattlesnakes basked in the scorching sunlight, and before they had been in the desert an hour Cal barely missed stepping on an ugly rattler who was lying asleep. Here besides the omnipresent creosote-bush and sage-brush, there was also salt-bush, or marsh rush,

showing plainly that this great silent desert had once been an inland sea, and in subsiding the ocean had left behind traces of its flora, as a reminder of its presence in æons gone by.

There were few magpies, but occasionally one saw a majestic desert red-tailed buzzard, wheeling about like a painted bird, clearly discerned against the bronze sky.

They had been trotting along steadily for about six hours, and the blue mountain perimeter to the west and southwest had faded away, until one was not sure whether it was a mountain or a low-lying cloud, when the colonel noted a peculiar yellow haziness to the north, which rapidly overspread that portion of the heavens. He was not versed in the ways of the desert, or he would have recognized that most to be dreaded of all the desert's horrors, a sandstorm.

But when the yellow haze had obscured

the sun and shut out half of the horizon to the north the colonel began to get anxious. The phenomenon was certainly queer. It made half day and half night of the desert. The sun's rays trying vainly to penetrate the thick atmosphere turned an amber color, which was sickly and disquieting, while the partial light cast over everything a ghastly hue.

Cal seemed to sense some coming calamity, for he jerked his head this way and that and traveled unsteadily, not like his usual gait.

It was not until the gloom had deepened to a shade almost like night, and shifting clouds upon the near horizon could be seen to rise and fall with the gusts of the rapidly rising wind, that the colonel guessed the whole truth. They were in for a sandstorm, the most to be dreaded of all storms, outside of a tornado.

Rapidly the gloom about them deepened,

the air becoming thicker with each anxious minute, until perhaps fifteen minutes from the time when the colonel made his discovery. Then the dense clouds shut down around them, and soon the hissing, spitting, spuming sands were falling all about them, biting the colonel's face and hands, and filling Cal's eyes with smarting, irritating particles.

The colonel had just time to head the calico horse into a defile between two piles of lava rock, and turn their backs to the storm, when the fury of the desert fiend was upon them. Soon it was as dark as midnight, and the colonel could hardly hear the stamping of his horse above the roaring of the storm.

Finally the winds buffeted them so severely that the colonel dismounted and sat upon the ground almost between the fore feet of Cal. Here the broad chest of the mustang partially sheltered him, and by

making a mask for his face of his large kerchief, he was enabled to keep out a part of the sand and smother kicked up by the wind, and also to partially escape the pelting of the sand, that bit the unprotected skin like particles of ice.

But the calico horse could not be shielded. He had to stand out in the open; but he did not seem to mind. He stood with head lowered, and his eyes shut perfectly tight, to keep the sand from cutting them. His back, now the colonel had dismounted, was slightly humped, and thus he stood a rather dejected equine, but also a philosophical one, so far as the colonel could see, for he seemed to be asleep most of the time. Doubtless he had seen sand-storms like this before he ever came under the domination of man. Probably as a wild horse he had learned to fight the elements. Wind-storm or rain-storm, sand-storm or sleet, it was all the same to him. He was a

creature of the wilderness, inured to hardship. Born and bred in the open, and toughened by exposure until he was a steed of iron.

The colonel too was a man of iron. He had seen exposure of all sorts—wind, rain, and cold he did not mind, but he had never been in a sand-storm before. It certainly was a cheerless position to sit cramped up like this, huddled in a heap between the legs of a horse.

The dust that he naturally inhaled, in spite of the kerchief, made his lungs ache, and his nostrils and throat to smart, but worst of all it incited an intolerable thirst. He occasionally moistened his throat and lips from the canteen. He had heard of such storms lasting for three days, and if they were in for any such siege as that they must husband their water.

Hour after hour went by without change. There was the sound of the sifting, drifting

sands, the intermittent roar of the wind, which frequently lulled, only to gather force for more persistent onsets, the steady, deep breathing of the sleeping horse, occasionally punctuated by a sigh, probably when Piebald awoke to the full sense of their uncomfortable and altogether undesirable lot.

There was nothing immediately threatening in the storm, only it was tedious to the last degree, and one could not tell when or how it would all end. The hardship and the discomfort could be borne, if they were only sure that they would get out of the dilemma before their water gave out. Water in this hideous desert was the price of life.

The colonel fell to calculating how long they could subsist on their present supply. Food did not matter. They could go without eating for some time, but water was a necessity. There were three gallons in the

water bag hung on the horse's side, and one canteen that he had not touched. The calico horse he imagined could go a long time without water if the need arose, as he was a desert horse.

The colonel had just concluded that they could stand it for two days comfortably and perhaps three, when he thought he heard a slight drip, drip, drip behind him. At the same second he heard the sound, Cal turned his head toward the side upon which the water bag was slung. With a cry of dismay the colonel sprang to his feet and clutched for the bag in the semi-darkness. To his unspeakable disgust he discovered that it was nearly empty. The continual jouncing of the long ride across the desert had caused it to spring a leak with fatal results. With trembling hands he unslung the bag with its precious contents and carefully emptied what remained into the canteen that he had been using. It filled it and there was a

quart to spare; as this was rapidly leaking from the bag he poured it into a canvas bucket, that he carried for the purpose, and gave it to Cal. He then resumed his seat beneath the horse's chest, and did some serious thinking, for unless it stopped blowing soon, and they could make their way immediately to water, they would see hard times within the next forty-eight hours.

Occasionally to hurry time, if that were possible, the colonel struck a match and looked at his watch. Never had he known such slow torturous hours. Minutes lengthened into quarter hours, and seconds became minutes. Finally, he determined from his watch that the sun had set and night was over the land, outside of this horrible inferno, but day and night were alike here. In corroboration of this discovery of the colonel's the coyotes soon began their mournful night song.

The colonel had often heard it before.

He had heard the song when he was wrapped in his blanket in the lonely mesa, he had heard it in the arboreal desert of Arizona, and on the plains of Texas, but never had it sounded so mournful or so much like a dirge. Then the little ground owls joined in with their plaintive, quavering, melancholy minor refrain, sounding, so the colonel thought, like the complaining of a lost soul.

Thus that terrible night in the desert, with the wind howling and buffeting them, the sand pelting and sifting, drifting and hissing all about them, began. It was a night that the colonel with all the harrowing experiences that he had been through as a soldier never forgot. He was more lonely than he had ever been on picket, when he was a soldier in the ranks, and had been detailed to stand guard while the army slept. The very air breathed desolation. The rest of the world was as com-

pletely shut out as though there were no world other than this storm; and he and Cal were at the heart of it. They were the centre of this tumult of nature. There was nothing else in the world but pelting, biting sand, nothing but buffeting winds, and the only sounds in the world were the everlasting howling of the coyotes and the quivering, complaining dirge of the ground owls, —a duet of misery.

In spite of his resolution to conserve the water supply, the colonel drank often as the night wore on. He had not fully recovered from his recent illness and had not the strength to withstand the burning thirst that he would ordinarily have had. Besides, the sand and fine dust that filled his throat, in spite of all his precautions, increased his thirst tenfold. The inaction and helplessness of his position helped to make him thirsty. In spite of his resolutions to think of other things, his mind re-

verted to the one thought continually: "How thirsty I am, how thirsty I am."

Finally his watch told him that it was morning again, and it did really grow lighter. The storm had not ceased, but it had lost some of its fury. The atmosphere, however, was still filled with dust, and clouds of cutting sand still raced over the sand-dunes, and whipped the dark, solemn piles of rock, and cut the cacti. All the greasewood and sage-brush was feathered and fringed with dust and sand. Around each stem of these shrubs a small pile of sand had gathered. The sun was shining somewhere, but it was outside this world of whirling sand and choking smother.

The colonel fed Cal from the saddle-bag, but he left a part of his oats. He evidently was not hungry. He wanted water, that was plain, but because of the accident to the water bag the colonel had none to give him.

The colonel tried to eat some hardtack, or camp biscuit, but they seemed drier than usual, and to eat made him doubly thirsty.

They waited for an hour or two after what should have been daylight, had there been any day in the storm-swept desert. Then the colonel mounted his horse, and again headed him northward, or in the direction which he thought must be north. But he was very much perplexed about the points of compass. He had no compass with him, having relied upon the sun and the mountains that could be kept in sight for a time.

For hours they plodded through the storm-wrapped desert, Cal picking his way carefully about piles of lava rock, and out and in among the cacti and the greasewood. Some of the time the colonel guided him in the way that he thought was north, while at other times he would lose heart and let him have his head. He was not at

all sure that they were going continuously in the same direction. Nothing was certain in this chaos, except desolation and thirst, —desolation and heaviness of spirit that grew with each passing hour, and thirst that finally dried up his throat like parchment. When they had been stationary he could partially shield his throat and lungs from the dust, but now he had to breathe out in the open, and take his chances with Cal. His good horse, however, did not seem to mind the hardship, but plodded steadily on.

At noon they stopped and he again fed Cal, who only nibbled a little at his oats, and then fell to cropping a bit of desert green that grew in a crevice by a stone. The colonel himself could not touch food. Instead he drank all of his water but one draught which he reserved, to be drunk a few drops at a time to keep his tongue from cracking.

His throat and tongue now felt very much as they had on the last lap of that desperate ride to Tucson, when nearly dead with thirst and fever he had clung so desperately to the saddle. His position now seemed very much the same, only he was not wounded.

At about three o'clock in the afternoon the colonel was struck by the similarity of a pile of lava rock to one that they had seen a few hours before. There was a peculiar formation at the top of the pile which the colonel in his fevered state of mind had imagined was the grinning head of some desert monster. He rode close to the pile and dismounted to examine it carefully, just as he had done before the other grinning head. Something in the sand at its base attracted his attention and he went down upon his knees to examine it carefully. A moment's scrutiny sufficed; it was Cal's own hoof-prints in the sand, tracks that

they had made not over three hours before.

With a groan of despair the colonel arose and laid his hand upon Cal's nose, and stroked his face.

"I am afraid it is all up with us, old boy," he said. "We are hopelessly lost. We are traveling around in a great circle. God only knows whether we are really five miles nearer water than we were this morning, and I had calculated we had traveled twenty-five miles."

This discovery of the colonel's seemed to take all the heart out of this man of iron. They were lost in the desert. Lost in this burning, choking, scorching waste. Water, precious water, the price of life, there was none. They could not travel in a given direction toward it, even if they knew which way to go. All they could do was to wander about and about hopelessly, until they dropped.

Even now the colonel felt like dropping from the saddle. The old light-headedness that he had experienced in the Santa Rosa desert was upon him; fever, the result of thirst, was again mounting in his veins.

In spite of his efforts to fight off despair, that demon clutched him. In spite of his resolution to keep Cal headed in a given direction, his hand dropped the line, and the horse went where he would. This was well for them both, but the colonel did not know this.

For three hours more the horse jogged on monotonously, and as on that other ride the creaking of saddle leather and the thud of the horse's hoofs in the sand resolved themselves into a sort of song. "Creak, a creak, creak, thud, a thud, thud," only Cal went much slower now than he had gone then.

At just about sundown, although there was nothing to show that the sun was set-

ting, the colonel swayed in the saddle and fell heavily to the ground. Cal stopped short in his tracks. His master was tired and wanted to rest. He had tumbled out of the saddle to sleep. They would go on soon.

For three hours the colonel lay upon the sands while the faithful horse stood like a statue waiting until his master should have finished his sleep. Occasionally he turned his head to look at the prostrate form. But he had often seen the colonel lying upon the ground, wrapped in his blanket. Presently he would get up and slap him upon the neck, a slap of good fellowship that Cal always understood, and then they would go on.

As Cal had thought in his dim horse way, after about three hours, the colonel stirred and then with some effort sat up. He had suffered a partial sunstroke, but the cool night air revived him. The first

thing that he noted was the dangling stirrup that brushed across his face.

"Why, here's my stirrup," he said thickly, and he tried to put his foot into it, with the result that he rolled upon his back.

After a few minutes he arose to a sitting position again. This time he comprehended the fact that he could not get his foot into the stirrup while sitting on the ground, so he arose feebly, and with more effort than he had ever expended before in his life got into the saddle.

Instinctively on being in the saddle he jogged Cal with the spur and they once again resumed this endless journey to nowhere,—that endless round of cacti and sand-dunes, with never a water-hole in the whole world.

Sometimes his tormented brain and his burning, sand-filled eyes would play him a trick and he would think that a beautiful lake brimming with cold, life-giving water

was at his very feet, but as he approached it, trembling in the saddle with excitement, it would gradually recede, and the colonel knew that it was merely a mirage, or a trick of hallucination that his fevered brain was playing him.

Then he would think that he heard the sound of running water,—cool, living water, trickling down through moss-covered stones. This too would prove to be merely a fancy, —a new torment, which added thirst to his parching lips and cracking throat.

Finally the colonel thought that he could smell water. The wind seemed moist and vital with the odor of that life-giving fluid. You may think it strange for a man to be able to smell water; but it is not, especially for a man who is dying for water. Cattle and antelope will smell water for miles away; and so man, when he is burning up for want of it, can smell it a long way off.

Was this odor of water that made each breath so vital but another trick? Would the odor soon fade away just as the sight and the sound of water had done? The colonel clung to the saddle with new hope and urged Cal forward, until he broke into a gallop. He could see nothing but gray sandstone ahead, but this odor of living water was unmistakable. He could almost taste it.

Then without warning the calico horse plunged down a steep bank, slipping and sliding, and sending a shower of small stones down ahead of him, and the full expanse of the Colorado River burst upon the colonel's bloodshot eyes. Water, water, water, bright and sparkling! Water, swirling and foaming, bubbling and dimpling! Water from the distant snow-capped Rockies! Water, as plenty as the scorching sand had been a few minutes before!

With a cry of exultation and joy un-

speakable the colonel rolled from Cal's back into the Colorado. Never before in his whole life had he considered water so precious. He rolled and tumbled in it, all the time drinking in great, cooling draughts. He splashed it upon his face, and in his burning eyes. He dashed it upon Cal, and laughed like a boy who dashes the water in the face of a fellow swimmer. He paddled in it like a child.

His body too responded to this wonderful fluid, so common, yet so indispensable. It soaked it up like a dry sponge. The dry, crackling flesh became soft and flexible. The blood coursed afresh through the veins. The pulse quickened and the eye regained something of its old lustre. For an hour they thrashed and tumbled in the water like boys, this hardened old soldier and the calico horse, until nature had done her work, and then they came out on the bank and made camp.

Once again the credit was all Cal's. He had retraced their steps from the very heart of the desert back to the Colorado, and thus had brought his master back to the fount of life.

The colonel slapped Cal upon the neck and stroked his nose, smoothed out his foretop and patted him fondly, and talked horse-talk to him until he had exhausted his horse vocabulary.

The calico horse responded by passing his upper lip quiveringly over the man's hands and face, the nearest to a kiss that he ever came, and by nipping his clothes playfully. This was in return for the colonel's slaps upon his neck.

For two days they stayed in camp upon the bank of the Colorado, recruiting their strength and spirits ; but on the third morning the colonel struck camp and again headed Cal into the desert northward. He was not the man to give up, even though

the first attempt to cross the desert had nearly cost him his life.

This time they had beautiful weather. Instead of the swirling, drifting sand, there were intensely highly colored distances, violet and purple, orange and saffron and, at the very end of things, the blue mountains. They made the crossing in two days, and at the end of the second day were at the railroad station from which the colonel was to take the train east.

He left Cal with a Mexican, José Calebro, a greaser who had been highly recommended to him by a fellow officer. The dark little man promised to take the best of care of the calico horse, and the colonel set out for the east with a light heart.

Just a month to a day from the time that he boarded the train East he was back again, looking just as brown and self-reliant as before. He went straight to the stable to see Cal, even before getting his dinner at the

hotel where he was to stop for a day before setting out to recross the desert.

The swarthy little Mexican met him at the gate, a troubled look upon his not too honest face.

"Señor la colonel, señor la colonel," he began the moment he saw the soldier. "Señor la colonel, miserarie, miserarie, I haive one bad news for you. La calico horse is dade. He gone dade two weeks ago."

"Dead, you rascal," roared the colonel. "What in the devil do you mean? Don't play any of your greaser tricks on me or I will skin you alive. Now, what is this you say?"

"La mercy, mercy, la colonel. La calico horse done gone dade. He dade two weeks gone by. I find he dade in the stable one morning. I buried him in the field near by. I will show the señor la colonel. Then he will believe."

The colonel released his grip upon the collar of the Mexican. Cal might really be dead after all. But what a blow! If the greaser could show him the horse's grave that would settle it. But what a home-coming! And all the rides which he had planned they would take together!

Encouraged by the colonel, but with chattering teeth, the greaser continued. He had not seemed sick, only he had not eaten well. He seemed lonesome, and to always be watching for some one who never came. He would always turn his head and whinny when a stranger came into the stable. He was restless and out of sorts. That was all.

The colonel questioned and cross-questioned, but could not shake the greaser's story. So finally he told him to lead the way to Cal's grave.

Out in a forsaken field, which had been too poor to build upon, or to cultivate, they came to a mound about ten feet long, and

six across. "There he is. I bury him there. He dade for suah, la colonel."

At the sight of the newly-made mound all hope went out of the strong heart of the colonel, and he sat down dejectedly upon the mound that was the last resting-place of his faithful horse.

José, thinking that the colonel might like to be alone, stole away and left the man of iron sitting with bowed head in his hands, looking moodily at the yellow mound. It had all come to this,—the rides and the years of comradeship that he had planned for himself and Cal. The fleetest horse in the Southwest was buried under that miserable yellow clay and sand. What chums they had been! How they had understood each other! How human the horse had often seemed! What intelligence he had and that wonderful homing instinct that would enable him, no matter how far from camp they had wandered, to make a

bee-line for their camp-fire. Twice that instinct had saved the colonel's life.

Now it was all over. Well, he would give up the army and riding. He never wanted to feel another horse under him after having ridden Cal. It reminded him of a loss that he had sustained when he was a boy.

A pet beagle had been injured and had to be shot as an act of mercy. Through half the night out under the pitiless stars he had mourned.

To some of my readers I presume this grief of the strong man for his horse or the boy for his dog will seem strange, but it is one of the best things in human nature, this love of man for the lower animals. If you had ever felt the soft muzzle of a dog slipped into your hand so confidingly when sorrow had overtaken you, or the smooth, caressing tongue licking away your boyish tears, you would understand. If you had slept upon

the mesa, lying in a blanket, with the wonderful southern sky above you, and then fallen asleep to the music of an "old bronc chawin' grass," then you would understand. Or if you had sat in the saddle watching the desert or the mesa or the rolling plains slip by to music of galloping hoofs, then you might also understand.

The truth was, the colonel had lost a dear friend. It did not matter whether he was human or horse. Friends in this treacherous world are rare, and the colonel's heart was very heavy.

CHAPTER X

A GALA-DAY AT SAN BERNARDINO

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San Bernardino is a Mexican city upon the border line between Mexico and the United States. It is situated upon the Rio Grande, just across from El Capino, in Texas. The two cities are joined commercially by an international bridge, which has figured many times in the making of history between the United States and Mexico. You may read references to this bridge in the newspapers almost any day if there happens to be something doing along the Mexican border.

San Bernardino is one of five or six important bull-fighting cities in Mexico. It does not rival Mexico City in the size of its

Plaza, or the gorgeousness of its bull-fighting spectacles, but it is a very close second to the capital city.

Bull-fighting as it is practiced in Mexico is an importation from old Spain, and is probably a survival of the old Roman games and spectacles of the amphitheatre, with all their brutality and very little of their Spartan valor.

The Mexicans are an impulsive people, quick to applaud, and the excitement of bull-fighting seems to satisfy them as no other sport does.

Every Sunday morning all through Mexico the populace, and the better class as well, flock to their great cathedrals, which are among the finest on this continent. Here they worship with deep devotion, for the Mexican is almost fanatical in his religion, but Sunday afternoon, throughout Mexico, her better class people flock to the bull-fights with just as much earnestness

as they showed in attending mass in the morning.

The Plaza at San Bernardino, where the bull-fights are held, is just outside the city, and is a very spacious covered building, open at the sides.

The seats for the spectators are arranged at the outside of the building, in a semi-circle. They are one above another like the seats in the circus. The building will seat ten or twelve thousand people.

There are boxes for the spectators of high degree, from which vantage point the officials of the city and men of distinction from all over the Republic, with a sprinkling of Americans from El Capino across the river, view the barbaric spectacle.

The inner portion of the building, opposite the circle of seats, is reserved for action. This is the arena. It is oval in shape, and is perhaps one hundred or one hundred and fifty feet across. It is divided

off from the spectators by two palings of seeming frailty when we consider that infuriated bulls are to be let loose in the enclosure, but the bulls usually have something else to think about than breaking out among the spectators.

The inner fence or paling is the first defense of the man who fights on foot. If he is pressed too hard he takes refuge by jumping the first fence. The bull sometimes follows him, and excitement in the audience runs high until the bull is again inside the second paling.

At the back of the arena there are several doors which are the exits for the picadors, matadors, and toreadors. There is also a hospital room to which the wounded bullfighter can be hurried, and rest rooms from which they emerge on the scene.

Perhaps the most important entrance of all is a great gate leading from the death pen, where the bulls are kept, directly

upon the arena. It is upon this gate that all eyes are fixed once the spectacle is announced to begin.

The bulls used for these Mexican bull-fights are a fine strain, originally imported from Old Spain, which have been bred for the purpose for hundreds of years. They are selected both for their beauty and for their fierce dispositions. The Mexican bulls are bred in the northwestern portion of Mexico upon a large cattle range situated on a plateau among the mountains.

These animals are reared as much as possible in a wild state, so that the bulls that are brought to the different Mexican cities to fight have never felt a rope from the time they were dropped as calves upon the range, until they were ridden down and roped a few days before the fight and shipped to the city to meet their miserable end.

The people that throng to these great

Plazas to see this national sport are as varied as the country can produce. There are the full-blooded Spaniards; very handsome men, with striking dress. The suit of these aristocrats is usually set off by a fine cloak, or toga, belted about the waist with a gorgeous scarf. The Spanish women too are famed for their beauty, and are gorgeously gowned. It is hard to say just what the true Mexican really is. Sometimes he is a Spaniard; sometimes he is half Spanish and half Indian; and often he is a full-blooded Indian.

The Indians who stick to their traditional dress are also gorgeously garbed, wearing magnificent blankets, and wonderfully ornamented head-dresses. Even if the Mexican or Indian is poor there is always a dash of color in the dress, so it is a gorgeous crowd that swarms to the Plaza Sunday afternoons to see the bull-fights.

In San Bernardino there is always a

goodly sprinkling of Americans who have come over the international bridge from El Capino to see the Mexican show. They would not be caught going to such a bloody affair in their own country, but to come over into Mexico takes off half the sin. Among this contingency there are many of the smartest turnouts in the Texas city. Cattlemen, planters, cow punchers, and citizens of various professions,—all are out for a good time. Excitement and betting run high.

The same Sunday evening in many parts of Mexico results of the fights will be talked of in the clubs and other places of general gatherings.

The successful bull-fighter is a sort of national hero, ranking much higher in the social scale than the American prize-fighter does in our country. He is often admitted to the best society and made much of.

On the particular Sunday afternoon with which our story has to do our old friend,

the colonel, occupied one of the boxes in the Plaza at San Bernardino. He had come over from the American city at the invitation of friends in Mexico to see the bull-fights which promised to be of more than ordinary interest.

There was a hum of excitement in the great crowd that nearly drowned the blare of the Mexican military band, discoursing a medley of national airs.

At the beginning of a bull-fight a door of the arena swings wide open and the Alquazil appears. He is mounted upon a fine horse with brilliant trappings, and is dressed after the manner of heralds of other pageants. He rides twice around the ring and then stops in front of the box occupied by the chief official of the bull-fight, and asks permission to have the bulls killed. This is at once granted. The official then rises and throws him the keys to the toril or death pen in which the bulls are confined. He is

hissed or applauded according to whether he catches the keys or not.

Then the gate of the pen swings open and the first bull enters.

Just as he comes through an assistant of the fighters, who is perched out of reach upon the gate, plunges a long sharp barbed dart into the bull's neck. This is to enrage him and get up his fighting fury.

Then the bugler (for all the events are announced by a bugle) sounds the call for the picadors. These are two in number mounted upon worn-out and worthless old horses, that are pretty sure to be killed in the fight. It is the picador's mission to charge the bull and try to spear him with his long lance. Sometimes they succeed; but more often horse and rider are both rolled in the dust, and the horse killed.

When the picadors have had their try at the bull the call for the banderilleros is sounded. These men are armed with long

sharp darts, which it is their function to plunge into the bull's neck. While they are engaged in doing this the attention of the bull is attracted by the capadors, men with red capes, which they display, causing the bull to charge them furiously.

When the banderilleros have lodged as many of their cruel darts (ornamented with gay ribbons) as possible in the bull's neck, he is ready for the matador, who is the star actor of the entire brutal game.

By this time the bull is fighting mad. A dozen darts are stinging his neck, causing him intolerable pain, and he is ready to wreak his vengeance upon one and all.

The matador carries in his left hand a red flag called the Muleta and in his right a short, sharp sword.

It is his desperate game to engage the bull with the red flag, getting him to charge by within arm's reach, and then to kill him with one desperate stroke from

the sword, either by thrusting it in the heart or by severing the spinal column just in front of the shoulders.

If he misses by a hair's breadth in his stroke, the bull is upon him and the result is often fatal. If he kills the bull with a single stroke he receives the plaudits of this blood-loving people.

We will pass over the first act in this bloody drama, for it is not with that that our story has to do. Suffice it to say that the decorated mules that are used to carry off the carcasses dragged away two dead horses and the bull when the scene had ended. It is with the second scene that we are concerned.

This portion of the entertainment was opened by Count Garsha Castillo, the most famous of Spanish toreadors, who advanced to the front of the arena, dressed in sumptuous silks, and velvets ornamented with gold and purple, and sang a famous toreador

song with which many Spanish bull-fights are opened.

He told in stirring recitative of the glory of Old Spain, the home of the bull-fight, of the beauty of her women, and the bravery of her men, of the ancient and honorable institution of bull-fighting, of the bravery of the matadors, and banderilleros and of the women at home who waited their safe return, the wonderful Mexican military band accompanying him with a light and airy accompaniment. At the end of each verse there was a short interlude by the band, and then the mighty audience broke into a magnificent majestic chorus, of "Long Live the Toreador," etc., which rose in volume, swelled by ten thousand lusty throats, until the entire Plaza rocked and vibrated with the sound. It was a chorus to stir the blood of a military man like the colonel, who thought that he could die to the sound of such music as that.

When the last echoes of this wonderful song had died away the bugler announced the entrance of the second bull, and that was soon followed by the announcement of the coming of the picadors.

These were two in number. One rode a dilapidated old bay, while the other was mounted upon a spirited cream-colored horse, who looked much too good a horse to be sacrificed in such a brutal manner.

From the moment that the cream-colored horse entered the arena the colonel's eyes were riveted upon him and they did not once leave him.

The picadors circled about the bull that at first refused to charge, but presently he was after them with a vengeance. He soon overtook the bay and sent him down upon his haunches, and then rolled him over dead.

For a moment he stood madly pawing above his vanquished enemy and then charged the cream-colored horse. There

was plenty of time to elude the bull, but the picador lost his head and reined the unfortunate horse the wrong way, so instead of escaping they came immediately into the path of the charging bull. Even then this horse that seemed to have the agility of a deer would have escaped, had he not slipped in a pool of blood from the last encounter, and fallen.

Most horses thrown as heavily as this would have remained helpless upon the ground, but not so the mettlesome cream, for he essayed to rise, but too late, for he had barely reared his fore quarters when the bull was upon him, charging so as to strike him fairly upon the side.

Then the Plaza at San Bernardino was treated to the most astonishing sight ever seen at any of its hundreds of bull-fights, —one that those who saw never forgot.

A tall, soldierly man in one of the upper boxes was seen to spring to his feet, as

though impelled by steel springs, and with a motion so quick that the eye could not follow it, his hand shot down to his side, something bright flashed in the sunlight and two shots from a Colts' revolver rang out so closely together that they made but one echo.

The bull wavered in his charge, braced his fore legs, and then pitched forward, his sharp horn, glazing the side of the struggling horse, missing him by a hair's breadth.

Then the colonel, for it was none other, sprang to an empty seat below the boxes, and thence to the ground.

With the strength of a Hercules he tore apart two of the palings of the outer fence, and squeezed between them. Then, with a spring like a panther, he cleared the inner fence, and rushed toward the picador who was beating the cream-colored horse with the end of his lance.

Seeing this madman advance upon him, the picador raised his lance to strike him, but the colonel wrenched it from his grasp and threw it into the middle of the arena. Then, with a mighty blow from his sledge-hammer fist, he sent the picador sprawling, while his left hand sought the bridle rein of the frightened horse.

Instantly, once the populace recovered from their astonishment, there was pandemonium, both in the arena and in the vast audience which roared and howled like a wild beast.

From half a dozen doors matadors, picadors, toreadors, and capadors came swarming into the arena as mad as hornets, and as noisy. They were armed with long lances, swords, long and short, and ugly looking bludgeons. All made straight for the colonel, waving their swords and spears.

But the soldier, who had been in tight places before, backed up against the cream-

colored horse and, whipping out the still smoking forty-four, covered the frenzied bull-fighters.

At the sight of this dread weapon, which they had just seen the American use to such good advantage upon the bull, they halted in their headlong charge and gradually drew back to the centre of the arena, where they stood, still flourishing their swords and spears and pouring out a torrent of Spanish curses.

At this point in this most extraordinary interruption of the bull-fight, there was another diversion, for still another tall figure leaped from the circle of seats in the audience, pushed through the opening made by the colonel, jumped the inner fence, even more lightly than the soldier had done, and Eagleheart was at the colonel's side.

"Bravo, chief," cried the beleaguered colonel. "You came just in time to have

the fight of your life. You just hold off those dago soldiers in the arena, and I will talk to this mob in front as soon as they quiet down a bit."

Eagleheart turned and faced the infuriated bull-fighters, who still cursed and shook their weapons, but as the Indian also held one of those deadly Colts' revolvers in his right hand, and a long hunting knife in his left, his front was just as stern as the colonel's had been.

Relieved of defending himself from the bull-fighters the colonel turned his attention to the audience, and it was the ugliest looking proposition that he had ever faced. The mighty crowd was roaring and howling, and seething like an angry flood about to break all bounds. A hundred men were standing upon their seats, with revolvers drawn, while as many more had their swords out and were shaking them at the silent man by the cream-colored horse.

Policemen were hurrying frantically up and down before the audience calling out for order, and commanding the men with drawn weapons to sit down. The Mexican military band was trying its best to create a diversion by playing Mexican airs with might and main, but not a sound from the band could be heard because of the roaring of the mob. That was what this pleasure-loving, but passionate audience had in a few seconds been transformed into,—a mob without reason or justice, calling loudly for vengeance upon the cursed Americano who had insulted them and their country, and desecrated the bull-fighting arena.

It was mostly in Spanish, but the colonel could make out cries of "Lynch him, kill him, hang him! Throw him in the bull-pen! To the dungeon with him! Kill him, kill him!"

It was a moment of desperate peril for the colonel, but he stood coolly looking at

the frenzied mob just as though another's life had been in jeopardy instead of his own. He did not think that the crowd would mob him, but the danger was that some hot-head in the audience would fire a shot and thus bring on a volley from the crowd, in which case he would probably be riddled with bullets. The mob was like a powder mill and only needed a spark to set it off.

Finally, after what seemed like half an hour to the two waiting in the arena, there was a slight lull in the raving of the crowd and the colonel cried, "Listen, Mexicans, I will explain!"

This announcement precipitated another pandemonium, and cries of, "Kill him, lynch him!" but they soon subsided and there was silence in the great amphitheatre.

"This horse which I have rescued from your hell-pen is my own property," said the colonel. "I left him four months ago in charge of one José Calebro, who has proved

to be a damnable scoundrel. I was gone East for a month and when I returned he told me the horse, that I prized above every other possession that I had in the world, was dead; and the scoundrel showed me his grave. I spent the worst hour that I have ever passed in my whole life by that mound where I supposed the finest horse in the Southwest was buried, when I should have been twisting the truth out of that scoundrel's worthless neck.

"My horse was sold into slavery, to be sent down here and used in your damnable bull-fight, just like any old crow bait.

"But, thank God, I was here to rescue him and in the future I shall be on the look-out for José Calebro. When I find him I shall have a long riata with me, and there will be a tree near by.

"Why, everybody in the Southwest knows the colonel's calico horse, as he is called."

At this announcement by the colonel

pandemonium again broke out. There were yells of "Liar!" and hooting and cat-calls. Insulting epithets were poured down upon the colonel like hailstones. Among which he finally made out the cries: "No calico! No calico! he is one color! He is cream!"

They had caught him. Now what would the lying American say?

The colonel raised his hand for silence.

"I see why you do not understand," he said, when he could make himself heard. "I will explain."

He stepped quickly to the side of the horse in dispute, and begun rubbing vigorously upon his rump. Immediately, as though by magic, a bright bay spot appeared about twice the size of a man's hand.

An astonished look swept over the audience. But the colonel was not done with his magic. Four or five brisk rubs on the horse's side disclosed another bright bay

spot, smaller than the first. Dear old Cal, how well the soldier knew where all these bright markings were! He stepped to his withers and uncovered another bay marking; and the crowd began to titter, for the horse began to have quite a calico look after all.

"He was whitewashed to disguise him," cried the colonel, turning to the crowd for a moment. "This is not all. I will show you."

He turned the horse around so that his other side showed and uncovered one spot after another, while the mirth of the crowd grew with each moment. Finally, when Cal stood before them fully revealed, they roared with laughter, just as they had roared with anger a few minutes before.

"There," cried the soldier when he had uncovered the last bay spot, "you now behold the colonel's calico horse. Twice he has saved my life. Once he brought me out

of the desert when I was desperately wounded, so weak that I could scarcely hold in the saddle. For fifty miles he carried me, without my so much as touching a rein. I would not sell him for all the money in Mexico."

"Listen," cried Eagleheart, when the thunderous applause of the colonel's remarks had died away. "I know him too. I found him many moons ago up in Nevada. I catch him and I break him.

"He is the wind. His coat is like the beaver. He is cunning like the serpent. He knows the mountain and the mesa like the Indian. There is no other such horse."

The sympathies of this mighty pleasure-loving Mexican audience were now all with the calico horse and his friends. A moment before they were ready to mob them, now they were equally ready to laud them to the skies.

In recognition of their mistake and as an

apology to the soldier the president of the association arose in his box and cried, "Vive la Americano! Vive la colonel!" Instantly the crowd took up the cry and shouted it until the Plaza rocked.

Then some one at the other end of the Plaza started another cheer.

"Vive la Eagleheart! Vive la Eagleheart!" This cheer, too, was repeated again and again.

Then a small boy in the middle of the Plaza cried in a shrill voice, "Vive la calico horse! Vive la calico horse!"

With this cheer the crowd went frantic and cheered until the Plaza fairly trembled.

While the tumult was still at its height the colonel turned and led Cal out of the arena, through the door where he had entered a few minutes before as the mount of a picador.

Out into the open street and under the blue sky they went to freedom, but far

down the thoroughfare the cheering of the crowd followed them as though wishing them farewell. "Vive la colonel! Vive la Eagleheart! Vive la calico horse!"

CHAPTER XI

HIS MASTER'S CALL

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THREE years have now elapsed since that eventful Sunday afternoon when the colonel and Eagleheart rescued the calico horse from his tormentors in the Mexican bull ring, and brought him up into what the colonel calls "God's Country."

These three years have brought great changes both to the calico horse and his master. Shortly after the recovery of his beloved horse the colonel decided to give up the army, and so resigned his commission as one of Uncle Sam's fighting men. He then bought a large stock ranch in Texas on the Panhandle, and with his usual ardor went into stock raising. So diligently he applied himself to the new voca-

tion that to-day his ranch feeds tens of thousands of cattle and sheep, and many hundreds of horses, the finest blooded stock that he can buy.

But there is no horse on the ranch, be he ever so blooded, that holds any such place in the colonel's affection as does a certain old calico horse. He is really nothing but an old bronc, but in the eyes of his master he is the greatest equine in the world.

No visitor ever comes to the ranch but he must pay respects to this old favorite. The colonel will trot him forth with all the delight of a boy in showing a new possession, and, to the admiration of all beholders, put him through his cavalry paces, besides many tricks which the busy man has found time to teach him.

Finally as a crowning achievement, he will bring forth a cavalry carbine, and laying it upon the ground, tie a string to the

trigger ; the other end is given to the would-be soldier, who holds it in his teeth. At the command "fire," he jerks his head back quickly and discharges the carbine, to the great delight of his audience.

Then the colonel will slap him on the neck, and cry, "Well done, men," and he in turn will pull the soldier's sleeve with his teeth, just to show that he is a joker, too.

When this mettlesome old horse is not confined in a paddock near to the colonel's own bungalow where he can call his master with a whinny, he is trotting about the ranch, with all the freedom and delight of a big dog. Sometimes he pushes open the door and sticks his head into the spacious hall of the bungalow, while he is often seen upon the piazza. As the colonel expresses it, "There isn't anything too good for Cal on the place. If there is I don't want it."

One September afternoon, the fourth year of the colonel's residence on his Panhandle

ranch, he was sitting under a giant eucalyptus tree in front of the bungalow reading and smoking, when he noted a cloud of dust half a mile up the road, and presently he made out an Indian riding rapidly toward him.

The rider soon drew rein in front of the bungalow and, throwing the reins over his horse's neck, dismounted. Then the colonel saw that it was Eagleheart.

The Navajo chief (for such Eagleheart had now become) made his way straight to the colonel, who rose to greet him.

"How," was his greeting. "My white brother is well?"

"Never better, chief," was the soldier's reply. "What can I do for you?"

"Much," replied the chief, with his usual brevity. "I come on important business. You will remember that many moons ago you bought the calico horse from me. That day a cloud passed over the sun for Eagle-

heart and it has never fully lifted. He has owned many fine horses since, but none like him. All these many moons I have kept my horses and sheep, and added to them, until I am the richest of all the Indians in the Arizona country. I have increased them tenfold, and now I come to offer them all to you for the old horse. The ten horses are now one hundred, and the one hundred sheep are a thousand. I will give them all for the old horse."

In spite of the fact that the colonel was a man of little sentiment a great lump came into his throat at the words of Eagleheart.

Here was this man, a mere savage as the world looked at him, offering a fortune, the savings of a lifetime, for a worthless old broncho, a horse that was not really worth twenty dollars. True, he was the most wonderful horse in the world, in the colonel's estimation, but would he himself, for all he loved Cal dearly, give as much?

Would he offer freely his great ranch of thousands of acres, and his tens of thousands of stock for the old horse? He valued Cal above all his other earthly possessions, but he clearly would not give all that he possessed in the world for him.

The Indian, accustomed to read signs and to see truth where others see nothing, saw that the soldier was deeply moved. He also divined that a struggle was going on in the colonel's mind, so he added another argument.

"The old horse, he be more happy too back in the mountains and the mesa. He like the Indian. A part of the desert and the mountains. He love the wind and rain. The storm and the whirlwind. I find him many moons ago in Nevada, near to Silver Creek Canyon. He would go back there and live the rest of his moons. The buck, when the hounds pursue, fly back to the place where they start him and

die with his flank to the wall, so the fox die at the home burrow, and so the old horse return to the mesa."

This red man was wise with the wisdom of nature, thought the soldier; perhaps after all Cal really did long for the old free wild life.

He was born a bronc, and perhaps it was best that he should die a bronc, instead of as a pampered thoroughbred.

"If I really thought he wanted to go with you, Eagleheart, I would give him to you. I don't want your one hundred horses and one thousand sheep. What are they to me?"

"My white brother has spoken well," replied the Indian. "He is very rich, and the Indian is poor because of the loss for these many moons of his horse."

The colonel pulled a small whistle from his pocket and blew upon it twice, and in answer to the call a jockey appeared.

"Put my best saddle and bridle on Cal and bring him here," he said.

Eagleheart's eyes glistened at the words, but he maintained a dignified silence.

Presently the groom brought forth the calico horse, so beloved of these two men.

"Chief," said the colonel, passing his hand lovingly through Cal's foretop, "I am going to try an experiment. You are a great horseman, greater than I am in some ways; now, if you can call Cal away from me he is yours, without price. You lead him one hundred paces up the road, then throw the rein over his neck and leave him. Go on for another hundred paces. Then we will both call him and the one to whom he comes will be his master for the rest of his days. I will let him choose between us."

"My white brother has spoken wisely," replied the Indian. "It shall be as he says."

The colonel sent the groom into the bungalow for an old bugle, for he had been a bugler when he was first enlisted in the ranks. Cal was an old war-horse, and the soldier knew that he would go through fire and water at the call of the bugle. When all was in readiness for the test, the calico horse one hundred paces up the road, and the Indian two, the colonel put the bugle to his lips, and blew "boots and saddles" as he had never blown it before.

At the old familiar war-call, that he had heard so many times at the feed-rack, when a cavalry horse, the old war-horse's head went up, his eyes snapped, and he snorted and pranced, and whirled as though to come to the colonel.

At the same second a whistle, clear, shrill, cutting the air like a knife, sounded in his ears. It was the old call with which Eagle-heart had summoned him from the mesa or the mountains in the old days.

Again the bugle sounded, and he pranced and snorted, and again the clear, shrill whistle filled his tingling ears.

The bugle was civilization and all it meant, and the shrill whistle was the wilderness calling. One was the call of man and the other the call of nature.

Then both the bugle and the whistle sounded at the same time, and in his distraction the old horse reared in the air. He was torn by two mighty forces. On the one hand was the army and its routine and on the other the wilderness and its freedom.

Again the bugle sounded and the whistle was still, but the old horse turned his head up the road toward the Indian. Then the whistle sounded again, and he no longer wavered, but trotted slowly toward Eagleheart.

Frantically the colonel sounded "boots and saddles," but it was hopeless, for he had

THE INDIAN WAS COOKING VENISON

lost. The old horse had answered the call of the plains.

Not wishing to see them go, the colonel went into the bungalow, and when he returned to his seat under the eucalyptus tree half an hour later the road was empty.

That same evening twenty miles away in the foot-hills of the mountains, a solitary Indian, with an old piebald bronc, was encamped. Eagleheart had given his own horse away to the first pedestrian that he met, wishing to be alone with his favorite. A bright camp-fire was sending its cheerful rays into the gathering gloom. The Indian was cooking venison and the old horse was eating oats, poured upon the ground in the old familiar way.

The night sounds were all about them. From a little spring near by came the soft tinkle of running water, while the adjacent forest and the more distant mountains

talked together in low, deep tones, that only those who loved nature could hear.

Presently from far up the canyon came the prolonged howl of the great gray wolf. The horse threw up his head and snorted, but he was not afraid. This was his world, and long ago he had conquered all fears of it. From nearer at hand came the unearthly night chorus of the coyotes, and presently a little monkey-faced owl joined in with its wavering complaint,—the old familiar desert dirge.

Then one by one the large, luminous stars filled the Southern sky until they were so thick there seemed to be room for not another one.

From the cedars near by came a pungent night wind, mingling scents too numerous to mention,—the bewitching twilight distillation of nature; and as the night on the Panhandle grew the old bronc munched his oats, and heaved deep sighs of content, while

Eagleheart watched the stars and was happier than he had been before in many moons.

Once more nature had claimed her own, and it was well.

2056

Hawkes, Clarence

Piebald.

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Dec 13	[illegible]

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